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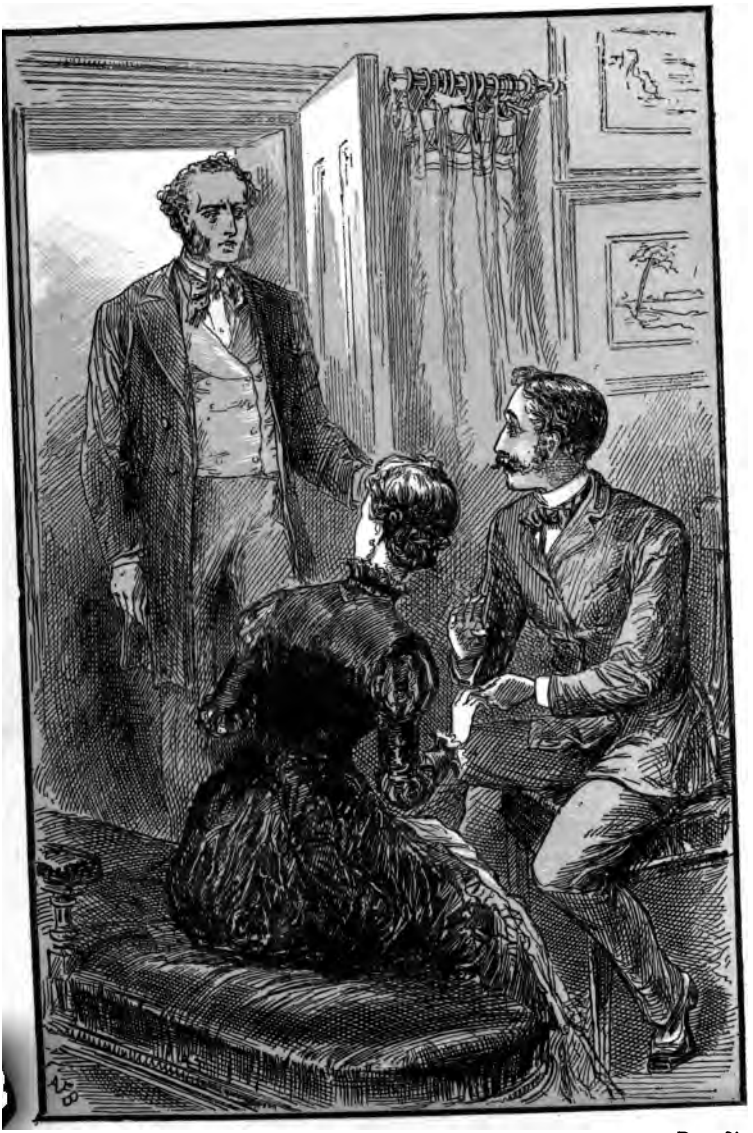

THE FAMILY FAILING
BY
DARLEY DALE.



THE FAMILY FAILING.







ntispiece. AN UNEXPECTED VISIT. PAGE 24.

THE

FAMILY FAILING.

BY

DARLEY DALE,

Author of "Little Ironsides," "The Black Dunbars," "A Thankful Victory," &c.

ILLUSTRATED.

LONDON:
BLACKIE & SON, 49 & 50 OLD BAILEY, E.C.;
GLASGOW, EDINBURGH, AND DUBLIN.
1883.

F. 9. 759.


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THE FAMILY FAILING.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES THE FAMILY TO THE READER.

ONE o'clock! All the clocks in London had just announced this fact to the inhabitants of the great city, and all the clocks in Mr. Kilgour's house had imparted the same information to his household. Half a minute later the butler followed up the clocks by performing a solo on the gong in his second best style; he reserved his finest performance on this musical instrument, the only one he played, for the late dinner in the evening. This signal, which announced luncheon, was promptly obeyed by Mrs. Kilgour, her sons and her daughters, who now entered the large and handsomely furnished dining-room, and took their places round the well-appointed table.

"For a wonder we are punctual to-day," said Mervyn Kilgour, the eldest son; "for as a rule we never sit down to luncheon till ten minutes past one; while as for dinner, any time between seven

and eight seems to do equally well. I never came near such an unpunctual family in my life."

"It is such shocking bad form too," said Grace. "In all properly managed houses the clocks strike the dinner-hour and the dinner-bell is rung simultaneously; but that is a state of things we shall never arrive at, we never do anything like other people."

"What does it matter whether we begin lunch at one or two? For my part I am sure I should not care if we never had it at all," said May, playing with some soup.

"I should, though, I can tell you," began Sydney, the youngest of the family, just eleven years old.

"You need not tell us anything of the kind, it is patent to everybody; if your appetite and May's could be equally divided between you, it would be a happy thing for you both," said Mervyn.

"May, do eat something, it does worry me so to see you looking so thin and miserable; what with you and Kitty, I really don't know what to do, my life is a misery to me," said Mrs. Kilgour, beginning to cry gently over her plate.

"I am sure mine is to me," said May.

"I know London does not suit any of you any more than it suits me: a close, stuffy, smoky, foggy place; it is killing us by inches. But I shall never persuade your father to leave it, he is so obstinate, and so fond of London himself," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"I don't see how Father could leave London, unless he lived so near that he could come up to town every day, and the daily railway journey would be very bad for him," said Mervyn.

"Why doesn't he give up the Stock-exchange altogether—I am sure we are rich enough—and have a country-house, and come to London for the season as everybody who is anybody does?" said Grace.

"I wonder if there ever was a girl or a woman who understood stockbroking or the Stock-exchange. Fancy Grace supposing we should be as rich as we now are, if Father gave up the Stock-exchange, as she expresses it! I believe you women think the Stock-exchange is a menagerie of bulls and bears, a sort of joint-stock affair kept by stockbrokers and members of the Stock-exchange," said Mervyn.

"I am sure I don't think anything of the kind. I neither know nor wish to know anything about it. It is bad enough for Father to have to earn his income without his daughters understanding how he does it," said Grace.

"Bad enough! What do you mean, Grace? If I can ever earn as much money as Father does I shall think myself a very lucky man," exclaimed Sydney.

"Don't you understand the difference between earning money and inheriting it? I do, if you don't, and I hate Father having to earn his money," said Grace. "I would rather have to live on five hundred a year of our own money, than on five thousand gained by work of any kind."

"Don't talk such utter rubbish, Grace, or I declare I will send you away from the table. I can't imagine where you have picked up such ridiculous notions; you ought to be only too grateful to your father for working so hard as he does, instead of

talking such contemptible nonsense," said Mrs. Kilgour angrily.

"Why, Mother! didn't you know that is one of Grace's trials?" said Mervyn.

"It is a pity Grace has not a real trial to bear, if she makes one out of such rubbish as that," said May.

"Grace has plenty of real troubles," said Grace.

"Let us have them then Grace. First and foremost, Father makes his income on the Stock-exchange, go on; what is the next burden laid on your slender shoulders?" said Mervyn.

"I should like the very best masters in London for everything, instead of the second and third-rate people I have to learn of; that is another trial," said Grace.

"Well, when you know all the second and third-rate people can teach you, it will be time enough to grieve over that. What else?" said Mervyn.

"I hate riding hired horses; I want one of my own, as Mabel Miles has," pursued Grace.

"Mabel Miles is an introduced young lady, and you are only a little girl of fifteen. Really, Grace, I must get your father to put a stop to this friendship of yours with the Miles's if you learn such nonsense of them," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Let us have a complete list of all her sorrows, Mother. Poor Grace, it only aggravates her sufferings to let her bear them in secret. What is the next trouble, Grace?" said Mervyn.

"My allowance; it is not half what I ought to have, considering our position," said Grace.

"Oh! if you call that a trouble, we are all rowing in the same boat. I mean to have a talk with

Father about mine: unless he doubles it when I go to Sandhurst I shall be over head and ears in debt at the end of the first term. I can't possibly manage there on less than double my present allowance," said Mervyn.

"I wish I had no greater trial than that, Grace; I can't dress as I should like on forty pounds a year, but where's the use of asking for more? It only makes a fuss: Father lectures, and says he won't give more, so I never ask him now. Anything for peace and quiet," said May.

"Except give up Brand," whispered Mervyn.

"Mother, talking of allowances, have you asked Father to raise my pocket-money?" said Sydney.

"No, I have not; but I will tell him this evening what a discontented set of children you all are, and we shall see what he will do. Where are you going, Sydney, this afternoon?"

"To play football, Mother."

"Pray be careful, then; I can't bear your playing football, it is a horribly dangerous game. I am always uneasy until you are home; can't you do something else to-day?"

"No, there is nothing else worth doing; besides I am going to play in a match."

"Well, get back as soon as you can, for these doctors are coming at half-past two to see poor little Kitty, and I don't want any further anxiety to-day; as it is I am quite unnerved," said Mrs. Kilgour as Sydney ran off. He came back a minute later with a message.

"Mother, Nurse says Kitty is crying so dreadfully. Will you go up to her?"

"Poor child," said Mrs. Kilgour rising, "I suppose she is frightened about these doctors."

"Why, they are not going to put her into plaster of Paris to-day, are they?" asked Mervyn.

"No, but there is to be a consultation between Dr. Temple and the plaster-of-Paris man; he has not seen her yet, and Kitty hates a new doctor; besides she can't bear the idea of being encased in plaster, she thinks it is a very mysterious operation and it frightens her," said May as her mother left the room.

While Mrs. Kilgour is gone we will take a peep at her three eldest children who still remained at the dinner-table, for it was a habit of theirs to sit and chat after every meal.

May, the eldest of the family, was a sweet-looking girl of eighteen; she was of average size, with a remarkably pretty figure, small hands and feet, and a somewhat sad face; she was scarcely pretty even with the bloom and beauty of youth fresh upon her, but she was interesting-looking, and her manner fascinating. One charm she possessed in common with her mother and sisters, a sweet voice. Just now, for reasons of her own which we shall shortly discover, there was a plaintive ring in her voice, as though she were continually speaking in a minor key. She was not a great talker, and as a rule preferred listening; it was less trouble, and May was not fond of trouble.

Grace was unlike May in this respect, she was a little chatter-box, and no music was sweeter to her ears than the sound of her own voice. Her conversational powers were generally exercised in her father's absence, for he did not encourage

her to talk, but rather tried to impress upon her the wisdom of the proverb, "Speech is silvern, but silence is golden;" more particularly in little girls, he would add, much to his daughter's disgust. Grace was a fairer edition of May; but at present, as Mervyn constantly told her, she was all corners and angles and arms and legs, with nothing elegant about her, a criticism that was severe enough now, and seemed likely to become a libel before long. Even Mervyn was at times disposed to acknowledge this so far as to make pertinent allusions to the fable of the ugly duckling.

As for Mervyn himself, he was a very important person in his own estimation, having just left school, and already preparing to pass into Sandhurst. He was a fine handsome boy, just seventeen, tall and well-made, with broad shoulders like all the Kilgours; a fair complexion, blue eyes and curly light hair, which he flattered himself was golden, an opinion shared by no one else except his mother, in whose eyes he was faultless.

Next to Grace came Kitty, a delicate child of thirteen, now suffering from curvature of the spine, and about to undergo the treatment mentioned above. Sydney was the youngest of the family, and instead of being a pet was rather snubbed by all the others, a treatment that did him no harm, but rather contributed to make him the nice little boy he undoubtedly was: always in a scrape, but always managing to fall on his feet.

Mervyn and his sisters had not left the table when the doctor's brougham drew up to the hall door; and Mervyn was still boy enough to hide

behind the curtains to get a peep at the plaster-of-Paris man, as he called Kitty's new doctor.

"He is not old at all, nor cross-looking, nor ugly, as Kitty prophesied; on the contrary, he looks a nice, kind man," reported Mervyn.

"We had better ring for James to clear away; they will have their consultation in here after they have seen Kitty," said Grace.

The next hour was by no means a cheerful one for any of the family, for they were all very anxious to know the opinion of the new doctor on poor little Kitty's case. At last the doctors left her room and locked themselves up in the dining-room, when May and Grace ran up to Kitty to hear her opinion of the plaster-of-Paris man.

"What is he like, Kitty? Is he kind? Tell us all about him," exclaimed Grace, seating herself on her little sister's bed.

"How flushed you are, Kitty dear! Don't tire her, Grace," said May, stroking the golden head that lay embedded in pillows.

"I like him very much, May; he is so kind and gentle, he did not frighten me a bit; and when Mother told him I had been crying all the morning, he sat down where you are now, and took hold of my hand and talked to me," said Kitty.

"And are you to be put into plaster of Paris?" said Grace.

"Yes; but it is not so bad as we thought; and now I know how it is done, I don't mind so much. I sha'n't be frightened at all."

"But do you know how it is done?"

"Yes, he told me exactly; it won't be next to my skin either, as I was afraid, and I shall be able

to move, I could walk about if I might in it; and after the first week he says I sha'n't mind it a bit; and then he thinks I shall certainly lose the pain in my back, if I lie still all day and don't move off the sofa."

"I am so glad, dear; when is it to be done?"

"On Monday morning; Mother has to take me to his house, he can't do it anywhere else. Do you know what he thinks of me, May?"

"No, dear, the consultation is not over yet. I wish it were, I am so anxious to hear the result. I think I will go and see if they have finished, and make Mother get all she can out of them; if Father interviews them we shall never hear what they say. Grace, stay with Kitty while I go, will you?" said May.

Down to the hall ran May and gently tried the dining-room door, which was still locked. As she turned away to go upstairs again a violent ring of the bell accompanied by a loud knock at the hall door arrested her; James ran up from the lower regions, and May, finding she had not time to get up the first flight of stairs without being seen, slipped into her father's study behind the dining-room.

"Visitors, I suppose; we are not at home to-day, James," said May as the man passed her. The next moment May repented of this conventional fib, for the voice she heard in conversation with James was one that would always find her a willing listener. Regardless of consequences May went into the hall; there stood a dark handsome young man about three-and-twenty, who seemed to hesitate to come any further.

"He is very badly hurt," this gentleman was saying when May rushed forward.

"Harry, oh why have you come?" exclaimed May, "I am so sorry," she began, but her looks belied her words.

"May, this is luck," exclaimed Mr. Harry Brand seizing May's hands in his and whispering something that James did not overhear.

"But I forgot Sydney. I happened to be at the football match," said Mr. Brand with a slight stress on the word "happened," that told May it was not an accidental occurrence, "and I saw the whole thing; poor little fellow, he is badly hurt; he fainted clean away, but he soon came round, so I put him into a cab and brought him home. I must carry him up the steps now, May;" and he reluctantly dropped May's hands and the part of Romeo to resume the character of the good Samaritan. "Where shall I put him?" he asked, appearing again with Sydney in his arms.

"In Father's little room, the doctors are in the dining-room," said May; and this handsome young scamp, whom Mr. Kilgour regarded as the incarnation of evil, gently laid his burden on a sofa, while May adjusted the pillows, an operation that had to be performed carefully, so no wonder it took a very long time.

"There, old boy, don't you cry now, and if you like I'll go back and punish those two big fellows for their part in it; young cowards, I should enjoy thrashing them. How's your arm?"

"It hurts me, and I can't bend it; I believe it is broken," said Sydney.

"I am quite sure it is; never mind, Syd, once

it is set you won't have much pain, and luckily it is the left," said Mr. Brand, who while he talked to Syd contrived to pay plenty of attention to May.

"Sydney, how did it happen?" said May.

"Why, he fell with the ball in his arms, and then he was hacked, kicked you know, and it is a mercy he wasn't killed."

"I should have been if Mr. Brand had not dashed in and picked me up; you must have been hurt too, I am afraid," said Sydney.

"Oh, Harry, are you? yes, look at your wrist, how it is bruised and swelled!" said May.

"It is nothing; but, May, this boy ought to have his arm set at once. Can't those doctors be disturbed? If not, you had better send for some one else."

"I'll go and see," said May, and she went, and Mr. Brand very unnecessarily went also as far as the dining-room door, when he returned to Sydney, while May was admitted to the doctors.

In a few minutes May returned with Dr. Temple, who confirmed Mr. Brand's opinion that the left arm was broken.

"I'll get Sandys to help me to set it, if you can send some one round to my place for the splints and bandages, Miss Kilgour," said Dr. Temple.

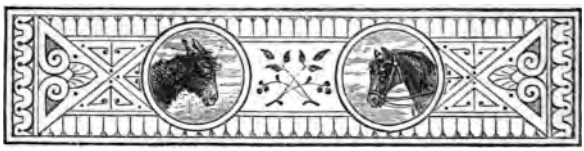
"Certainly," said May, ringing the bell to give the necessary order. "Is the consultation over, Dr. Temple?"

"Oh, yes, we had just finished. I wish we could move Sydney into the dining-room, the light is much better in there; besides, if Mrs.

Kilgour has not heard of this accident, there is no occasion to tell her till the arm is set," said Dr. Temple.

This arrangement met with the complete approval of Mr. Brand and May, for it would leave them alone until the arm was set, which would take at least half an hour; so Sydney was moved into the dining-room by Mr. Brand, who was complimented by the doctors on his skill as a nurse, both telling him he had mistaken his vocation when he joined the army. This young gentleman was a lieutenant, having just been promoted, on the strength of which promotion he had about a week before asked permission of Mr. Kilgour to be engaged to May, a request which had been decidedly and peremptorily refused. Mr. Kilgour's reasons for this were, in his own opinion, excellent: he had known Harry Brand for the last ten years, for he and Mervyn had been at Harrow at the same time, though of course in different forms, and Mr. Brand had always been as unpopular with the masters as he was popular with the boys. A wild, harum-scarum, good-for-nothing young scamp, Mr. Kilgour considered him. Fond of horse-racing, billiards, cricket, dancing, tennis, he undoubtedly was, and a first-rate hand at all. Harum-scarum he might be, good-for-nothing he was not; he was good for his own profession, as his colonel would have testified, for he had no more promising officer in the regiment than Mr. Brand if he could only be induced to read. There was another thing greatly to his credit: he managed to live on his pay, and he was never in debt. Mr. Kilgour, how-

ever, disapproved of the engagement, had forbidden him the house, and at the same time had told May that until she was of age he would not allow her to hold any communication with him. Under such circumstances these two young people were doing a very risky, not to say impertinent thing, to sit for half an hour or longer in Mr. Kilgour's own sanctum, in which they were liable at any moment to be caught by him on his return from the city. The chances were he would be home earlier than usual to-day, as he was of course anxious to hear the result of the consultation on Kitty; but May and her lover were far too much engrossed with each other to think of this. They were disturbed once by Sydney's screams when his arm was being set, but after that they heard nothing but their own conversation, which we may safely say no one else would have been interested in. And so Mr. Kilgour let himself in with his latch-key, held a short conversation with James in the hall as he divested himself of his overcoat, and then opened the door of his study and surprised the astonished couple, who, if they had thought about the matter at all, had probably supposed him to be at least five miles off.



CHAPTER II.

MAY IN THE DEPTHS.

MR. KILGOUR was a tall, fine, handsome man, rather square about the mouth and chin, which betokened the firmness which in his children, as they were privately wont to say, he called obstinacy, but in himself strength of will. The small mouth with firmly closed lips spoke of the owner's reserve, and spoke truly, for he was a very reserved man; even his wife knew very little and his children next to nothing of his affairs; nor had it ever been part of his system to assign reasons for any of his commands, a thing was to be done or left undone because he said so, there must be no questioning or arguing. Somehow this system seemed to work better with his boys than with his girls; the boys loved him, the girls feared more than they loved him, especially May. They all respected him and looked up to him, and were proud of him too; they felt restraint in his presence, and yet the house seemed empty if he were not in it. He was a very clever man, and they admired his cleverness, and he was certainly the

centre of attraction in the household, and a constant topic among his children, who were given to speculate on why he did this, and what he would do in that instance.

No sooner did it come to Mervyn's ears from James that Master had caught Miss May and Mr. Brand in his study, than he rushed upstairs to Kitty's room, where Mrs. Kilgour was with Grace.

"I say, Mother, Brand and May are in the study and Father has caught them. I wouldn't be May, or Brand either for the matter of that."

"Harry Brand here after your father has forbidden him the house! How dare he do such a thing?" exclaimed Mrs. Kilgour.

"Don't you know, Mother, Sydney was hurt at football and Brand brought him home; he has broken his arm, the doctors are setting it now," said Mervyn, at which news Mrs. Kilgour ran down-stairs as if she had been shot, to see for herself what had happened.

Almost immediately after May came into the room as white as a sheet, fell into a chair, and sat panting with her hand on her heart, which was thumping violently.

"You poor old thing, what has happened? what did Father say?" asked Mervyn.

"Not much at present; it is to come, my dear boy," said May with a comical gesture of despair.

"To come! I thought by the look of you it was all over; where is Brand? Is he to be dealt with first?"

"Do tell us what happened, May," interposed Grace.

"I hardly know; I was sitting on the sofa talking to Harry—" began May.

"Who was of course at the extreme end of the room," interrupted Mervyn.

"When the door opened and in walked my father. We jumped up, and he stood facing us while Harry explained how he came to be there; then without answering him Father turned to me and said in his own peculiar way, 'May, go upstairs until I ring for you.' I did not wait to be told twice, but as I left the room I heard him say to Harry, 'As for you, sir, I am astonished at your cool—' and that was all I caught, but it was a very short interview, for as I was speaking to Mama on the stairs I heard him leave the house. Oh, dear me! I wish I had never been born; get me some tea, Grace, to nerve me for this coming interview with my father."

"I like the way May always speaks of her father when she is not on terms with him. Where is your father now, May?" said Mervyn.

"In the dining-room with Mother, and Sydney, and the doctors, and there may he remain," said May.

Just then Sydney appeared, looking very pale, with his arm in splints, and so exhausted with walking upstairs that he was ready to faint. May roused herself to attend to the child, who soon revived and entertained the others with an account of his sufferings, by far the greatest of which, in his opinion, was the pain he endured when the doctors were setting his arm.

"Have they gone yet, Sydney?"

"No; Dr. Temple is with Mother, and the other

man, I don't know his name, is closeted with Father in his little room," said Sydney.

"Long may he remain there," reiterated May; "but we shall never know his opinion of Kitty now, at least only so much of it as Dr. Temple sees fit to tell mother."

Presently they heard the hall door shut and the doctor's brougham drive off, and then shortly after a bell rang to summon May.

"There's the upstairs bell, May, that is for you; make haste, don't keep Mr. Kilgour waiting, for that won't improve matters," said Mervyn.

"Oh, dear! how I wish it were over!" said May rising with the air of a martyr to obey the summons.

"I would give five guineas to see the interview," said Mervyn.

Mr. Kilgour was standing with his back to the fire when May entered the room, his lips set firmer than usual; "an unfavourable sign," was his daughter's mental comment.

He began the interview by asking May with much ceremony to be seated.

"Certainly," said May aloud, inwardly adding as she took an easy-chair, "I may as well be as comfortable as circumstances will permit."

"May," said Mr. Kilgour, "the last time I spoke to you on this subject I told you I considered all this nonsense between you and young Brand at an end; I forbade him to enter the house, and you to hold any correspondence with him; you remember this, I presume?"

"Yes," said May.

"And yet a week after I find you and him

tête-à-tête in my private room; what explanation have you to make for such conduct?"

"He brought Sydney home from his accident, and as he could not walk he carried him in here, and then we stopped talking, and—and—I think we forgot everything else."

"It was a great piece of impertinence on both your parts, and I warn you, as I warned him, not to let it occur again. But we will let that pass, it is the future I wish to speak to you about. Before you leave this room I must have a promise from you that you will hold no correspondence whatever with him without my knowledge and sanction, which, it is needless to say, I can never give. I believe you to be quite incapable of meeting him clandestinely or anything of the kind; and to give him his due, I don't think he is capable of that either, though he has defied me to put a stop to your engagement. Will you promise me to hold no communication with him?"

No answer from May, who was apparently more interested in the buttons of her dress than in her father's conversation.

Mr. Kilgour looked hard at his daughter, and then slowly paced up and down the room as if turning something over in his mind; then he resumed his old position and renewed his question, adding:

"Answer me, please, May."

"I can't promise," said May at length: she would have liked to have said much more, but she dare scarcely trust herself to speak.

There was another pause, during which Mr.

Kilgour seemed lost in thought, and then he suddenly drew a chair close to May and sat down in front of her, taking her hands in his, for which movement May was entirely unprepared, and accordingly Mr. Kilgour gained the advantage.

"May," he said, "you are only a child, just out of the school-room, and I have every right to treat you as a child, but I will not do so. I will give you my reasons for disapproving of this engagement, and then I hope you will be sensible enough to see that I am right. In the first place, you are too young to think of such a thing; in the next place, you have seen nothing of the world. This boy, for he is hardly more, is almost the only man you know, and you may meet half a dozen men whom you could care more for. He has nothing but his pay to live on, therefore marriage would be impossible probably for the next ten years, and I object to a long engagement. But besides all this, he is an idle, good-for-nothing fellow.

"He is an excellent officer," interrupted May.

"I doubt it; he cares for nothing but horse-racing, billiards, and gaiety of every kind; he seems to think life is a series of games, and leads a mere butterfly existence. In short, he is in my opinion quite unworthy of a moment's thought, and you must try and make up your mind to have nothing more to say to him. It is for your own happiness, I am sure, to give him up; you know I would not urge it unless I thought so, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said May wearily.

"Then you will be a good child and give me that promise, won't you?"

"Yes, I promise, but I hate it, and I shall never be happy again," said May.

"Yes, you will; you will be happy in a certain way now, because you have done right," said Mr. Kilgour, rising and drawing May to his breast, who, unaccustomed to such demonstrations from her father, burst into tears.

"Poor child!" said Mr. Kilgour, kissing his daughter, who, as soon as she could escape from his arms, left the study and ran upstairs to have her cry in her own room.

Mr. Kilgour paced up and down the room after May had left, lost in thought, until the first bell roused him to the fact that the dinner-hour was approaching. Both his interview with the doctor and the scene he had just had with May gave him plenty of food for meditation, and furnished him with two problems to solve. The first was how to prevent May and Harry Brand from holding any intercourse: true he had May's promise, and he believed she would do her best to keep it; but on the other hand Mr. Brand had given no such promise; on the contrary, he had plainly announced his intention of defying Mr. Kilgour to the utmost, and marrying May some day, though it might be ten years hence, in spite of all opposition. Now Harry's regiment was stationed at Aldershot, and so long as he was within such easy reach of May, Mr. Kilgour felt certain he would constantly contrive to see her even if he were unable to speak; he was a great friend of Mervyn's too, and Mr. Kilgour hardly felt justified in forbidding his son to continue the acquaintance; and yet, though he believed May would refuse to

receive letters, he hardly thought she would or could decline to listen to a message sent through Mervyn. There seemed only one remedy: to send her away: but the question was where to send her, and it was one Mr. Kilgour found very difficult to answer. He mentally went through the list of all his and Mrs. Kilgour's relations, but he could not hit on one to whom May would go except under compulsion, and he did not wish to add to her trouble unless it was absolutely necessary. "There is no one but Mary," he said to himself, "and if May breaks her promise I must send her there, but, poor child, it would be a bitter trial."

Mary was a married sister of Mr. Kilgour's, and by no means a favourite with May, one of the articles of her creed being, "All relations except your own immediate family are a nuisance created to worry your life out."

The second problem Mr. Kilgour had to solve was easier of solution, but, as far as he could see, most difficult to put into practice. The truth was, Dr. Sandys wanted to have Kitty entirely under his charge, in his own house, away from her own family for six months certainly, but how to reconcile Mrs. Kilgour or Kitty herself, or indeed any of the family, to such an arrangement was more than Mr. Kilgour knew how to accomplish without inflicting great pain on them all, and this he was very loth to do. He quite agreed with Dr. Sandys that part of the child's illness was nervousness, to meet which she required to be treated with firmness as well as great kindness, and this was impossible so long as she remained at home,

for even her father was most indulgent to his invalid child, and would humour her in every possible way, constantly sitting up with her till long past midnight, singing songs or telling tales if she were restless or in pain.

Moreover Dr. Sandys had learned from Dr. Temple that the family failing of the Kilgours was discontent, which they inherited from their mother: they were always complaining: the air did not suit them, London was unhealthy, they hated the neighbourhood, they were dull and had not enough society, their food was never cooked to their liking, were a few of the general complaints common to all. Besides these, each member of the family had his or her own peculiar grievance which he or she was always bemoaning; Grace's troubles we have had a list of; Kitty's related to her health and were of a more reasonable nature; Mrs. Kilgour had her servants as her special grievance. With the exception of the nurse, who had been twenty years in the family, they were the bane of her life, and she never wearied of discussing their shortcomings and her consequent sufferings.

Mervyn and Sydney complained of their allowances and of their father's strictness, while May had always been sentimental and given to indulging in imaginary sorrows until Harry Brand appeared upon the scenes to supply her with a real trial, and one she was quite disposed to make the most of. All this was very depressing to a child like Kitty, who lived in the midst of it, indeed her couch was the centre round which all the sufferers were wont to congregate and indulge

their complaints; and Dr. Sandys declared if he was to do any good at all to his little patient he must take her quite away from all these injurious surroundings. He had no objection to Lizzie, the nurse, accompanying her; indeed he would rather she did, for she was a cheerful body and devoted to the child, and as he laughingly added, there would be no fear of the doctor ill-treating or neglecting his charge if she were in the house. Dr. Sandys's plan was that he should come daily for a week to see Kitty and endeavour to win her consent to being placed with him; he was very sanguine about obtaining it, as all children liked him, and he had taken a great fancy to Kitty during this first visit. He proposed nothing should be said of the plan to any one except the child and the nurse until the following Monday, when she was to be taken by her mother to his house to be encased in her plaster jacket; then Mr. Kilgour was to break to his wife that the child was to remain there for six months, during which time she would of course be free to visit her whenever she liked, though it would be advisable that the visits should not be too frequent. This was his plan, and Mr. Kilgour was turning it over and over in his mind when the gong warned him to get ready for dinner.

As he dressed, Mrs. Kilgour, true to her threat for once, informed him that Grace had imbibed some very ridiculous notions, and was ashamed of her father being on the Stock-exchange, though she had probably not the least idea what it meant; that she wanted a horse to ride, and was not satisfied with the instruction he provided for her.

"Is there anything else I can do for her?" asked Mr. Kilgour.

"I think that was all; but Mervyn wants his allowance doubled when he goes to Sandhurst, and Sydney wishes you would advance his pocket-money," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"I will give Sydney ten shillings to console him for breaking his arm; he bore the setting very well, poor little fellow, Temple tells me. Mervyn may pass into Sandhurst before he talks about having his allowance doubled; he goes up for his preliminary next week, but we shall not hear the result till the end of the month. And as for Miss Grace, I will speak to her the first time I have an opportunity."

Mrs. Kilgour made no reply, but she did not envy Grace, and she half wished she had not told her husband what had been said that day at luncheon.

For the next few days Kitty, who was visited daily by her new doctor, seemed mysterious and in unusually good spirits; she and Nurse were continually holding conversations which ceased abruptly when any of the others appeared, and she looked forward with the greatest pleasure to Dr. Sandys's daily visit, the event of her day.

Even on Monday morning, on which day she was to have her plaster-case put on, she was very bright and cheerful; only when, after an early dinner, she was carried down-stairs to be taken by her mother and Lizzie to the doctor's did her courage seem to fail a little, and then she insisted on being kissed by all her brothers and sisters before she was put into the carriage.

Little did any of the four think as they complied with her request how long it would be before they met again, and under what different circumstances that meeting would take place.



CHAPTER III.

FAILING.

MR. KILGOUR found an opportunity of speaking to Grace about her grievances, but what he said no one but Grace ever knew, and she utterly declined to repeat it, although Mervyn and May spent most of the afternoon on which Kitty was taken away in trying to discover.

"Was he cross or kind, Grace?" asked May.

"Was he satirical?" said Mervyn.

"Did you cry?" inquired Sydney, who was at home on account of his broken arm.

To all of which Grace answered, "I sha'n't tell you."

"Is he going to retire from business? and has he promised to change all your masters?" said Mervyn.

"Is he going to buy you a horse?" asked Sydney.

"No, he is not going to do anything of the kind. I wish you would all hold your tongues and not keep raking up that horrid subject; you won't get anything out of me, I can tell you," said Grace.

"Let her alone, boys. I am sure life is a dreary business enough without making it worse by worrying each other," said May languidly, preparing to lose herself in a novel for the afternoon.

May had three principal occupations, reading novels, doing embroidery, and scribbling long crossed letters to friends with an account of her trouble and her father's supposed cruelty.

Novel-reading was her favourite occupation, and it was perhaps as useful as either of the others. She had just finished the second volume, and had risen to get the third, the only interruption which ever disturbed her while reading, when, as she passed the window, she saw the carriage return with only Mrs. Kilgour in it.

"Why, Mother has come back alone; where are Kitty and Lizzy, I wonder? What can be the matter?" exclaimed May.

Grace and Mervyn started up at these words and rushed down-stairs to see for themselves, while May was sufficiently roused to follow slowly.

"Where is Kitty? Why hasn't she come back?" was the chorus that greeted poor Mrs. Kilgour as she entered the house.

"Wait till I am upstairs, children, and I will tell you," said Mrs. Kilgour in a low voice, and seeing she was on the verge of tears they obeyed; but no sooner were they in the drawing-room than they began again.

It was one of Mrs. Kilgour's peculiarities that she rarely answered a question directly, but generally, as in this instance, replied by asking an-

other. "Did you know anything, May? Were you in your father's confidence?"

"Know anything! What do you mean, Mother? Do tell us where Kitty is!" said May.

"Yes, for goodness sake answer us, Mother! Don't keep us all on tenter-hooks; what have you done with the child?" said Mervyn.

"It is not my doing, Mervyn, it is your father's; till an hour ago I knew no more about it than you do;" and Mrs. Kilgour burst into tears.

"Oh! really, Mother, do tell us what has happened! This suspense is horrible. Where *is* Kitty?" said Mervyn impatiently.

"Has she had the plastering, or whatever they call it, done yet?" asked Grace.

"Yes, that is all done, and as soon as it was over your father told me that he and Dr. Sandys had made arrangements for Kitty's remaining there for the present," began Mrs. Kilgour.

"And you don't mean to say you have left her?" interrupted Mervyn.

"Of course, what else could I do? It would have been very bad for her to have moved her directly this plaster of Paris was put on," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Oh, it is wicked!" said May, who was very fond of Kitty.

"How dare Father do such a thing!" cried Grace.

"It is a horrid shame," inelegantly remarked Mervyn.

"And a caddish trick," put in Sydney.

And then they all began again abusing Dr. Sandys, and blaming their father, and their

mother almost as much, for having left the child.

"It is not my wish, children, it is all your father's doing; you know what he is, and how useless it is to oppose him when he has made up his mind on any thing."

"Poor little Kitty! did she cry much, Mother?" said May.

"No, she was in the secret, and stayed of her own freewill; indeed, to do both your father and Dr. Sandys justice, they would not have insisted on it unless she had consented, although they think her recovery depends upon it."

"I hope Dr. Sandys will be kind to her. How are we to know whether he is or not?" asked Grace.

"Lizzie is with her, and is to remain all the time, so there is no fear of that. Besides, Grace, your father would never place Kitty under Dr. Sandys's care unless he were perfectly satisfied he would do his utmost to cure her, and make her happy while she is there," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"It is a shame, though. How often are we to see her?" asked Mervyn.

"That depends on how she is. Of course your father and I can see her whenever we choose to go; but Dr. Sandys will not admit any of you until he feels certain it would do her no harm. The treatment is to be entirely altered. It seems he considers a great deal depends on her moral treatment," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Which, I suppose, means he is going to be very strict with the poor child. Oh! dear, it is a miserable world," sighed May.

"I hope you will tell Father we are all very angry at this arrangement," said Mervyn.

"And that we hate his plan," said Grace.

"He might have told us, instead of treating us all like children," said May.

"I will tell him what you all say, and perhaps he will give you some explanation," said Mrs. Kilgour, leaving the room, when the storm of righteous indignation against the supposed cruelty burst out again and raged till Mr. Kilgour appeared to quell it.

"So I hear you are all very angry with me about Kitty. Now I will tell you why Dr. Sandys thought it necessary to remove her, and you shall judge for yourselves if I am the person most to be blamed. Kitty requires gentle but firm treatment, and cheerful society is specially necessary, and Dr. Temple has often thought that the atmosphere of discontent in which she lived here was very bad for her. Dr. Sandys goes further. He considers it most injurious, and that no medical treatment would be of much use so long as it lasted. Kitty has fallen so much into the general habit of complaining that it is difficult to know when she is really in pain and when she only fancies she is. I make no accusations; but I leave it to your own consciences to say if it is my fault that poor little Kitty has to be banished; and surely I need hardly say I feel the trial myself as keenly probably as any of you," said Mr. Kilgour, and as he spoke his eyes filled with tears.

His hearers made no reply; but they felt the justice of Mr. Kilgour's remarks, and no more

complaints about his unkindness in sending Kitty away were heard from any of the family.

A sharper lesson than this, however, was necessary to teach them the virtue of contentment, and it was one that they would very soon have to learn, and certainly would never forget.

The following week Mervyn went up for his examination for Sandhurst. The first day was only the medical examination, which he passed easily enough, being a well-made healthy young fellow, and suffering neither from deafness nor short sight. The next two days were not so easily got through, and he had three weeks to wait before he would know the result; but he flattered himself he had done very fairly, and as he was not ambitious of taking a very high place, but would be satisfied if he passed in, he came home at the end of the third day feeling very hopeful. When he entered the house May and Grace both looking frightened met him, and pulled him into the nearest room.

"Hulloa! what is the matter? You both look as white as ghosts. Has anything happened?" asked Mervyn.

"Yes; but we don't know what; it is very bad, though, be it what it may," said May.

"For goodness sake tell me what it is without making a mystery! Is any one ill?" said Mervyn.

"No; at least Mother is not well; but it is this something that has upset her," said May.

"But what is the something?"

"We don't know, only that Father came home just as we had finished luncheon, looking deadly pale, and as though he could scarcely speak. We

all thought he was ill; but he declared he was not, and asked for some brandy. I gave him some, and he drank a glass off neat, and then told Mother he wanted to speak to her. They went upstairs to the drawing-room, and there they have been ever since," explained Grace.

"All we have heard since is, Father rang the bell and told James if any one called, to say 'Not at home,' and to tell me to take Mother up a cup of tea at five o'clock. I took it just before you came in, and she was lying on the sofa looking very ill, and had been crying dreadfully. They asked if you were back, so perhaps they will tell us now what is the matter," said May.

"I'll run up and see. I have got on splendidly to-day; perhaps that will cheer them up," said Mervyn.

He sprang up the staircase in four or five bounds, and without any further ceremony rushed into the drawing-room.

"Well, I did better to-day than yesterday, Father. Are you ill, Mother?" he exclaimed in the same breath.

"I am glad to hear it, my boy. Yes, your mother is ill. I have had to tell her some very bad news, and it has been too much for her. Call the others up and I will tell you what it is, for it concerns you all," said Mr. Kilgour, who was still looking very pale, and spoke with an effort.

Mervyn was not slow to call, nor the others to obey the summons, for they were all most curious to learn what had occurred.

"I have very bad news to tell you, my dear children. I have had a very heavy loss. At

present I can scarcely tell how it will affect me; but it is hardly exaggerating to say that I may be a ruined man," began Mr. Kilgour.

This news struck the children as nothing very bad after all. They could not realize it, nor had they any idea of all it involved.

Grace was the first to speak.

"But, Father, I thought people lost a fortune one day and made another the next on the Stock-exchange?" she observed.

"I am afraid that is a mere method of speaking, Grace. I have certainly lost a fortune within the last few days; but I can't say I see my way clearly to making another," said Mr. Kilgour with a faint smile.

"But will it make a great difference to us, father?" asked Mervyn, who was more alarmed than his sisters at what they had just heard.

"Yes, my boy, it will indeed. Fortunately, there is your mother's money untouched. That is between four and five hundred a year, so that you will none of you be actually in want; but we must live in a very different style to what we have hitherto done—for a time at any rate. It is possible I may be a rich man again some day; but for the present, at any rate, I am a poor one. I hope a sale will not be necessary; but we must let this house at once, and get out of it as quickly as possible. The carriage and horses must be sold, and the servants dismissed, and I must look out for a small house in some cheap neighbourhood where we can live quietly."

Strange to say they all took this news far better than Mr. Kilgour anticipated. The girls neither

fainted nor cried. They looked very grave; but if they had acknowledged the truth, they would have said they felt they were about to lead a new life, and perhaps a happier one. Change of any kind was rather welcome. Mervyn was not inclined to share this feeling, and at his father's next words he began to realize that an actual calamity had befallen them.

"But it is harder on poor Mervyn than on any of us," continued Mr. Kilgour, "for I fear he must abandon the dream of his life. I could not afford to send you to Sandhurst, my boy, for the next two years certainly, and then you will be too old. So I fear there is nothing for us but to choose another profession for you."

This was indeed a terrible blow to Mervyn, who ever since he was big enough to beat a drum had talked of being a soldier. As a child his favourite game had been sham-fights, and many a scrape had he fallen into through firing toy cannons and playing with gunpowder. As he grew older he delighted in reading of battles. Wellington was his favourite hero, a battle-field the only field in which he cared to distinguish himself; to lead a forlorn hope, and perhaps die in the attempt, the highest pinnacle to which his ambition ever raised him—and now, just as the door to this warlike paradise was opening to him, it was closed with a sudden sharp bang for ever. He made no reply, but walked hastily out of the room into the school-room, which was on the same floor. There he found Sydney playing with some white mice.

"Take those filthy things out of here, and leave me alone. I want to work," said Mervyn.

"I can't carry them with one arm, Mervyn; do let me stay. I won't disturb you."

Mervyn's answer was to take the cage with the white mice in one hand and to grasp his brother's shoulder with the other, and to put them both out of the room, returning and locking himself in; while Sydney sat storming on the stairs, shouting for some one to come and carry his mice back to their home in the lower regions, and abusing Mervyn, as he dared not have done if his broken arm had not protected him from punishment.

As soon as he found himself alone, Mervyn sat down by the table, buried his head in his arms, and cried like a child. Then this mood passed away and he jumped up and paced the room in a frenzy, raging inwardly against his fate, and vowing he would not submit to it. Give up the army, and spend the rest of his life perched on some high stool, kicking his legs under a desk, studying law, or grubbing among mouldy old parchment! Not he; nothing should induce him to do anything of the kind, he would enlist as a private rather than that. Enlist! why should not he? He would not be the first gentleman nor the last who had done such a thing. True it was a hard life, and a very repulsive one to a man of refined habits; but if he swallowed his pride and did his duty punctually, he was certain of getting his commission in due course, then he would exchange into another regiment, and would have attained his object. Yes, he would do it; his father might object, would, no doubt, but he would not consult him till it was done, and then no objection would be of any avail. But how was he to set about it? And what regi-

ment should he enlist in? In the cavalry, he decided, not in the line. Whom should he consult? Harry Brand of course. He would not only advise him, but do all in his power to help him. He would go at once to Aldershot and see him; with which intention he shortly after left the house, telling James he would not be home to dinner.

When Mervyn arrived at Mr. Brand's quarters he found that gentleman just about to dress for mess; but as Mervyn was in morning clothes, and apparently desirous of a private interview, he changed his intention instead of his dress, and took his friend to an hotel, where they dined in a private room.

Mervyn soon laid his plan before Harry Brand, but to his disappointment that young officer threw cold water on the scheme from the very first.

"It never answers. Besides, you with your fine notions could never bear the life; you would be sick of it in a week;" and Mr. Brand proceeded to enlarge upon the life of a gentleman who enlists as a private in very strong language.

"Even I should not be able to do anything for you if you enlisted in ours. I should run the risk of being put under arrest if I were seen speaking to you. Besides, it would cling to you for life. The sort of men who enlist are mostly black sheep; besides, to live for years among common soldiers must tell upon any man. You must become one of them to a certain extent, and you can't touch pitch without being defiled. Depend upon it, Mervyn, old fellow, you will do best to give it up."

Mervyn was by no means convinced, though

his military ardour was a little quenched by some of the graphic pictures Brand drew of barrack life among the men. He ate his dinner almost in silence, and took the matter very seriously to heart.

"I have it! What an idiot I was not to think of it before!" exclaimed Harry suddenly when the two were talking after dinner.

"Have what?" asked Mervyn with little interest.

"Why, I have solved the problem for you. You say your father will probably be, if not as rich as he is now, at any rate well off again in two years, don't you?"

"Yes; but what is the use of that? I shall be too old then for Sandhurst," grumbled Mervyn.

"There is no need to go to Sandhurst at all; you can get in through the Channel Islands Militia. You are attached to a regiment to learn your drill, and you have examinations to pass, and then you get your commission. It is the back-way in perhaps, but scores of men of moderate means do it now, and there is no disgrace about it, any more than there is in being poor, and nothing disagreeable. You will have to go to Jersey or Guernsey; but if your people want a cheap place to live in, either of those would suit them down to the ground, I should say, and it is very kind of me to say it, for it will put the Channel between me and May. However, I am not a bad sailor, and if I don't find a way to see May when I wish, my name isn't Harry Brand."

"But, Harry, are you sure I can do it in this way? It is a splendid plan if it is only true,"

cried Mervyn, anxious to ward off the conversation from his sister, on which subject Brand was apt to wax prosy.

"I am quite certain; there are three exams., I believe: the preliminary is the same as for Sandhurst, so if you pass now you are eligible for the second, which is military; but I will find out all about it for you and let you know," replied Harry.

Armed with this information Mervyn returned home in excellent spirits, resolved to get his father that very night to consider the matter; he was so much excited about it that he could scarcely sit in the train till it bore him to London. On reaching home his patience was subjected to a further trial, for his father was out and was not likely to be back till very late. Mervyn solaced himself by talking the matter over with May, the only member of the family still up, and the best listener to anything that related even remotely to Harry.

May was not in favour of going to the Channel Isles, chiefly because it widened the chasm between her and her lover, otherwise she would have rather liked the idea.

The next morning Mervyn sought his father as soon as breakfast was over, and told him he had left the house yesterday with the intention of enlisting, but that Brand had dissuaded him, and suggested his going through the Jersey or Guernsey Militia.

"It is not a bad idea," said Mr. Kilgour, after what seemed to Mervyn an interminable pause; "but though there are many things in favour of it, there are several very serious objections. To

begin with there is Kitty; she could not possibly join us for six months, and I doubt if your mother can be persuaded to endure such a separation; if the child grew worse and we were in one of the Channel Islands it would be a very serious matter. Then it would entail my seeing very little of you all, for the greater part of my time must be spent in London, though I could arrange to go over very frequently. I will think it over and consult your mother; meanwhile rest assured I will make any personal sacrifice to accomplish your wish, since you are so bent on going into the army. But remember I may never be in a position to make you an allowance, and you will find it very hard work to live on your pay."

Mervyn replied that he had considered this, and was prepared for a hard life.

"You may tell young Brand I thank him for his information and his advice to you," said Mr. Kilgour as he left the room.

For the next few days nothing was talked of in the house but going to Jersey, and as the family were divided on the subject the discussions generally ended in a dispute, until Mr. Kilgour forbade the topic, and announced his intention of going over to Jersey himself in a few days to make inquiries. Before he left, the house was put into an agent's hands to be let furnished for two years, the servants all received notice, and Mrs. Kilgour was told to select what ornaments, knick-knacks, and pictures she wished to take with her into their new home as soon as one was chosen.

Mrs. Kilgour and May were as much against the Jersey plan as Mervyn and Grace were in

favour of it: Mrs. Kilgour on Kitty's account chiefly, May on Harry's.

It was on a Monday evening that Mr. Kilgour started for Jersey, and on the following Thursday, just as they were sitting down to dinner, a telegram was put into Mrs. Kilgour's hands. Telegrams were things she hated, and she handed it to May to open, saying she was certain it was to say her husband was either drowned or seriously ill. May opened it, and amid breathless silence read as follows: "I have taken a house here. Be prepared to cross next Thursday. Bring Ellen. I will write particulars." Ellen was the kitchen-maid, and had begged to be taken as general servant.

A bomb-shell thrown on to the dinner-table could not have created more surprise and excitement than did this telegram. Mervyn shouted for joy, Grace clapped her hands, Mrs. Kilgour seemed paralysed, and May fainted. It was some time before sufficient order was restored for dinner to proceed, and then no one except Sydney, whose appetite seldom failed, was inclined to eat much.

"I wonder what sort of house it is, and what part of Jersey it is in! do you think it will be in the town or in the country, or by the sea, Mother?" said Grace.

"I can't tell you, Grace; your father's telegram is sent from Bree's Hotel. All I know is that if it blows a gale next Thursday nothing shall induce me to cross. Anyhow, I don't see how I can possibly be ready with all I have to do here, besides the packing. One thing I have made up my

mind to, is to take as little as possible in the way of china and ornaments. I shall send most of it to your Aunt Mary to take care of."

"But, Mother, how ugly a furnished house will look without any of our own things in it! you know what abominations in the shape of ornaments lodgings always have, and I suppose furnished houses are the same," said Grace.

"I can't help that, Grace; if the boat goes down, and I dare say it will, they will be lost. It is a dreadfully dangerous passage, I know," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"But if the things are lost we should be too, Mother. So I don't see the force of your argument," said Mervyn.

"I am sure I sha'n't care if we are all drowned; we shall be spared a deal of future trouble if we are, I know," said May in a melancholy voice from the sofa.

"And of happiness too, May. So it is as broad as it is long. I expect to have plenty of fun in Jersey—fishing and boating. I only hope we are to live in the country; and we shall have to wait till Saturday for Father's letter, and it is ten to one if he tells us much when we do get it," said Mervyn.

The letter, when it did come, told them as much as any man under the circumstances could be expected to tell; a woman would have given, in a few sentences probably, just the very particulars as to the style of house they were all anxious to learn; but Mr. Kilgour, like all men, could not descend to details. The house, he said, was at Samarez, about a mile and a half from St. Helier's,

but there was a railway, and the station was close at hand; there was a garden, at present rather a wilderness, as the late tenants had neglected it, and a view of the sea from the upper windows. This was all they gathered from his letter, except particulars as to rent and the price of provisions, which did not interest the young people much. He added that if Dr. Sandys would allow them, he wished them all to go and say good-bye to poor little Kitty before they left.

The next few days passed all too quickly for Mrs. Kilgour and May, though they seemed interminable to Grace and the two boys, who were longing to see their new home. May daily looked in vain for a letter from Harry Brand, whom she longed to see, if only for a few minutes, before leaving England; but the days slipped by, even the last day, and they had said their last good-bye to their old home, and were driving for the last time in their old carriage to Waterloo, and May had heard nothing; when, as they reached the station, a gentleman stepped forward to help them out, and looking through her blinding tears and thick veil May recognized her lover.



CHAPTER IV.

FLITTING.

EMBARKING on board a small steamer at midnight from a strange port is not pleasant work to a nervous and inexperienced traveller such as Mrs. Kilgour, more especially when the night is so dark you can scarcely see your hand when you hold it up before your face, and when you have a family of children and a quantity of luggage to think of. She was the only one of the party who had ever crossed the Channel before, and perhaps for that reason dreaded it the most. Before she could be persuaded to move off the gangway she insisted on seeing the captain and inquiring if they were likely to have a calm passage, or if the wind were likely to rise.

"It will be calm enough, madam; no *wind* is likely to trouble us to-night," said the captain, with a slight emphasis on the word wind, which Mrs. Kilgour did not observe; and much reassured she stepped on board, reflecting that anyhow she had insured her luggage.

As they entered the ladies' cabin, which looked

comfortable enough after the cold, dark night they had come out of, the stewardess came forward and spoke to May, who was carrying a little toy terrier, the only thing she had undertaken to look after.

"Oh! but nonsense!" said May; "I must have the dog with me, he will sleep in my berth and no one will know he is here. I don't care for the steward, or the captain, or for any one; where I am there the dog will be; you say nothing about it, and you won't regret it when we get to Jersey."

And contrary to all precedent May carried her point, and the dog was wrapped up in a shawl at her feet, while Mervyn's collie was handed over to the tender mercies of the steward.

There were very few passengers that night, for it was at the end of March, at which season there is not much traffic, and in the ladies' saloon the Kilgour party and two other ladies were the only passengers, and being a calm night they were all soon asleep with the exception of May and Mrs. Kilgour. May was broad awake thinking of her last interview with Harry, which took place so openly she could not reproach herself for having broken her promise. For two hours the boat was steady enough, but as soon as they left Southampton Water there was a ground-swell and she began to roll; up jumped Mrs. Kilgour.

"Stewardess! stewardess! Is the wind getting up? The boat is rocking dreadfully."

"Hush! ma'am, you will wake the other ladies; bless you! we shall have no wind to-night, it is

only a little swell," said the stewardess not too civilly, for she was sleepy.

Another two hours rolled by, literally rolled as far as the boat and its inmates were concerned, and one or two already began to be ill, when suddenly a loud, shrill, and most unmusical whistle caused Mrs. Kilgour again to call out to the stewardess.

"Stewardess! what is that noise? Are we in any danger? What does it mean?"

"Oh, dear! ma'am, it is only the fog-horn; you will hear that often, for it is very foggy to-night," said the stewardess, and sure enough every two or three minutes this grating whistle broke on the ear. This went on for an hour or more, and then they slackened speed and went at half-speed, and the fog-horn was blown more frequently than ever.

"Oh! May," whispered poor Mrs. Kilgour to May, who was in the next berth, "I am sure we are in danger, we shall never get to Jersey; how thankful I am I insured the luggage!" but May had at last fallen asleep, having reached that stage of sea-sickness when sleep comes to the rescue; and Mrs. Kilgour was the only person awake in the cabin, till suddenly the boat stopped, and every one woke up and inquired what was the matter.

"Don't be frightened, ladies; I daresay we are only going to take soundings, but I'll go and ask the steward," said the stewardess, who, unlike the generality of passengers, was more nervous in a fog than in a gale. She soon returned to report that the captain did not know where they

were, and the fog was so thick they were going to lie at anchor till daylight. It was then about six o'clock, but there they lay at nine when the bell rang for breakfast.

"You had better get up, ladies, and have some breakfast, and go on deck a bit, for the fog is thicker than ever, and the captain dare not pass the Caskets till it lifts, so we sha'n't be at Guernsey before dinner-time, I am afraid."

"Why, we ought to be there now," said Mrs. Kilgour, glad, however, to be able to move about; and all but May went into the saloon to breakfast, but as soon as she attempted to get up she was ill, so handing Tan to Grace, she returned to her berth.

The morning seemed interminable; on deck all was damp and clammy, and the fog so dense that unless you leant over the bulwarks you could not see the sea; about twelve the sun endeavoured to pierce through the dense atmosphere, and they started again, but they made very slow progress, going only at half-speed, and stopping every few minutes to take soundings, the fog-horn blowing at intervals the whole time. There are few things more tantalizing than a fog at sea; the sea is generally calm, and if it were only clear you might make a splendid passage, whereas you can do nothing till the fog lifts, when probably a gale will spring up. The passengers paced the deck contemplating the boats and the life-buoys, and the other pleasant suggestions of means of rescue in case of danger with interested eyes, and congratulating themselves that if the worst came to the worst, and they struck on a

rock and had to take to the boats, there were not more on board than the boats could carry safely without overcrowding.

Suddenly between one and two the fog lifted, and they saw the Caskets behind them; steam was got up again as quickly as possible, the course altered, and they started again, but before they had gone a mile the fog came on again and they had to stop. This went on all the afternoon, the fog lifting for about ten minutes and then coming on again, though it was never so thick as it had been in the morning; at last, after a most tedious passage, they steamed into Guernsey harbour during a clear interval at about six in the evening. Here the Kilgours determined to go ashore for an hour or two, chiefly to take May to an hotel for some dinner, as she felt too ill to eat on board, and the captain had informed the passengers that he should not start before two o'clock in the morning, as he could not make Jersey harbour till daylight, except on a moonlight night, and there was no moon that night. All this was very provoking, for it was too late to see anything of the island, and to spend the evening at an hotel was only a few degrees more cheerful than to spend it on board; however, they were all too glad to be on *terrâ-firmâ* again to grumble much; indeed, nothing but the strongest sense of duty would have induced Mrs. Kilgour to set foot on board a steamer again.

Meanwhile, Mr. Kilgour had spent even a more anxious day than his family. He had passed the time in going from the hotel to the post-office, and from thence to the packet-office to inquire

for the mail, till the clerks in both, from being worried at his frequent appearance, began to take an interest in the stranger, and to wonder whom he had on board. At last, when he had decided that the luncheon he had ordered would be of no use, and he had countermanded it in favour of a high tea, more for the sake of deceiving himself than because he really thought they would arrive in time to partake of it, the charwoman informed him that the signal had just gone up to say the mail was at Guernsey. Scarcely daring to trust either her or the driver of the fly he had kept waiting for him, he jumped into the carriage and drove straight to the packet-office. There he learned the good news was true, but that the steamer would not come on that night, but might be expected about six the following morning. Back to Samarez then drove Mr. Kilgour to order breakfast, and to induce the woman to sleep in the house, so that he might remain at the hotel in order to be on the pier in good time the next morning.

Little thought he then of the sight that would meet his eyes that next morning.

The Kilgours went on board again at ten o'clock, and as they were not to start till two o'clock they all turned in and went to sleep, even Mrs. Kilgour dosing off after her previous long night of watching. The passage from Guernsey to Jersey is generally the worst part of the whole journey, and in spite of the fog the sea was rough, so that when they had started half an hour nearly all the ladies were more or less ill, while as for May, she soon arrived at that stage that

she did not in the least care what became of her. It was still very foggy and they made a very slow passage, but at last the stewardess rose from her berth and told them they were passing Elizabeth Castle and would be in the harbour in a quarter of an hour. Now there are two channels marked out by buoys from the Oyster Rock to the opening of the harbour; one is shorter than the other, and when the tide is high enough the steamers take the shorter passage, at low tides they take the longer.

Now, whether, owing to the fog, the captain made a mistake and took the shorter passage for the longer, or whether he thought there was sufficient water to get safely through, will never be known; at any rate he took the shorter passage when he most certainly should have taken the longer. The consequence was, shortly after the stewardess had made the above remark, to which, however, her ladies were all too ill or too sleepy to pay much attention, a fearful crash shook the ship, after which she reeled to and fro and then remained perfectly still, her engines going round at a fearful speed for a few seconds, and then suddenly stopping altogether.

"Oh, my good heavens! what is that?" cried the stewardess; but almost before she had spoken the cabin door opened and the second mate appeared.

"Ladies, come on deck as quickly as possible. We have struck on a rock and she is filling fast. Don't be alarmed, but make haste; we are close to the harbour."

In a second every one in the cabin, except May,

was off the berth or sofa she had occupied, and began to seize frantically her most valuable property. With the exception of Mrs. Kilgour, who had only removed her sealskin, which she seized while the mate was speaking, every one was more or less in a state of *déshabillé*, and Grace the worst of all, for she had insisted on undressing entirely the previous night, much against her mother's wishes, and now stood barefoot in her night-dress in the middle of the cabin.

"Grace," cried Mrs. Kilgour, "your ulster, put it on quickly, you have no time for anything else. May! May! get up, the boat is sinking."

"I can't, I am too ill," said May.

"Nonsense, May! you will be drowned; oh, dear! oh, dear! oh, George, oh! why didn't you come with us?" said Mrs. Kilgour, wringing her hands in despair.

"Come on deck directly. We must take to the boats," cried the captain's voice down the companion-ladder.

"Grace, go this moment, take Tan," exclaimed Mrs. Kilgour in such a tone that Grace obeyed; "Ellen, come and help me to move Miss May."

But Ellen had put a shawl round her bare shoulders and fled at the first summons; and looking round Mrs. Kilgour saw she was alone with May, who by this time had tumbled on her feet and was endeavouring to stagger to the door, Mrs. Kilgour picked up her hand-bag, which contained her purse and keys, and tried to lead her daughter on deck. They managed to get to the foot of the stairs, when May fell down in a dead faint.

"Mervyn! Mervyn! Sydney! Some one come

and help me. I can't move May," screamed Mrs. Kilgour, straining every nerve to lift the unconscious girl up the stairs, while the captain's voice giving orders to the men to man the boats, and to the passengers to stand back, fell like a death-knell on her ears.

After what seemed to Mrs. Kilgour an interminable period of suspense, but which was in reality only a few seconds, Mervyn sprung down the stairs, and bidding his mother go first, took May in his arms and carried her up the stairs, and placed her on a seat near the boat which was to be launched first.

"I had Sydney to look after, mother," briefly explained Mervyn, as he laid May down.

"Fetch a hammock," cried the captain, "and stand back from the boats; I'll shoot the first man that attempts to get in, except those I order to do so, till every woman and child is off the ship."

It was a strange scene, the rising sun not yet powerful enough to pierce the white mist that hung in patches over the sea and town, and through large rents of which pieces of the fort, the harbour, the piers and cliffs were visible. Just to their left, looming through the fog, which just there was only like a transparent veil, lay Elizabeth Castle, looking a dull gray mass of indistinct outline in this light; while to their right, where the clouds were slowly rising, figures could be distinguished on the pier watching the wreck. Among them stood Mr. Kilgour, who had come to meet his wife and children, and who now stood petrified, dreading each moment to see the steamer break up and his darlings drowned before his

eyes. It was only for a moment that he remained helpless; but, alas! he soon learned it was little that he could do but wait; the life-boat had been sent for, but doubtless before it arrived the passengers would either be safely landed or beyond all help; meanwhile several boats were putting out to go and help them. His first impulse was to go too, but on second thoughts he resolved to remain and receive them, for that the ladies would be saved first he never doubted.

But to return to the steamer, which was filling fast, and was not likely to remain intact another quarter of an hour; at any moment she might split in two, besides which, her boiler was in imminent danger of bursting. The rock on which she had struck had gone quite through her timbers, so that she stuck fast on it, and the danger was that she would break up; had she in the first instance managed to get off the rock on which she was impaled she must have sunk immediately, before there was time to take to the boats.

At last the first boat was launched, really very quickly, though it seemed long to the lookers on: two sailors by the captain's orders jumped in quickly enough, for to them a jump of eight feet was nothing, but it was not such an easy matter to those who were to follow.

"Ladies next, as quick as you can, please," cried the captain, and Grace, who stood shivering by him, tried to shrink back; but seeing her bare feet he called to one man in the boat to catch this lady, and then bade her jump: sobbing with terror and cold Grace obeyed, and the next moment was safe in the boat. Ellen, the servant,



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TAKING TO THE BOATS.

came next, and in her haste jumped so clumsily that she nearly upset the boat, lost her shawl, and bruised herself terribly. Then came two elderly ladies who, between their fear of being drowned and their fear of jumping, seemed in a fair way to accomplishing both feats by the same stroke, but were finally safely seated by Grace's side.

At the same time the first mate was superintending the launching of another boat from the other side, but this was even more difficult to reach from the steamer than the captain's, so none but men stood near it.

The stewardess would fain have followed the elderly ladies, but the captain held her back, saying, "Passengers first. Now, madam!" This was to Mrs. Kilgour, who had gone through such mental terrors in the last ten minutes, besides the night of fear she had passed in getting to Guernsey, than which no physical pain of death could have been worse, now felt that to die would be as easy as to live, easier if any of her children were lost. The fear of death had gone from her, as it does sometimes when one has passed through a long period of suspense, expecting it to come every moment when really there is no danger, then when death seems face to face with one the fear vanishes.

"My children first; I won't go till they are safe," she exclaimed, pushing Sydney forward, much against his will, for he would have liked to have waited till May and his mother were gone.

"Bring that hammock, put the young lady in it, and drop her into the boat," cried the captain. "Is your arm broken, child?" he added to Sydney.

"Yes," said Sydney, "but I can manage." Before, however, he had time to jump, the captain caught him by the other arm, leaned over the ship's side and dropped him into a sailor's arms.

Then May was dropped down in the hammock, and then Mervyn by sheer physical force pushed his mother forward and tried to free himself from her: he succeeded by promising to take the first place offered him, and then Mrs. Kilgour jumped in, followed by the stewardess.

"There is room for one more; you go, sir," said the captain.

Mervyn went forward, but suddenly remembered his collie, which much against his will had been given to the steward: he turned to fetch it.

"My dog; I must fetch him."

"There is no time; be quick, jump in; it is all we shall do to launch another boat in time;" and the next moment Mervyn found himself willing or unwilling in the boat, and heard the order given to let go the rope and take the oars.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Kilgour as Mervyn sat down beside her.

"We are not ashore yet, ma'am," said one of the sailors, who had a superstitious dread of thanking God before they were safe.

"How far have we to go?" asked Mervyn.

"A quarter of a mile or so: we shall do it easily enough if the fog don't come on again," returned the man.

The attention of Mervyn and Mrs. Kilgour was now turned to May, who was still unconscious; but when Mervyn sprinkled her with sea-water she showed some signs of reviving, and then

luckily Mrs. Kilgour remembered she had some brandy in a flask in her bag, which she had retained through the confusion almost mechanically, as she afterwards said. They gave her some, and in a few moments she opened her eyes and asked where they all were.

"There she goes," exclaimed one of the sailors as a loud crash was heard; and looking round they all saw the steamer sink into the sea till only the tops of her funnel and masts were visible.

"There will be none of her left at high water," said one man.

"But are they all saved?" asked Mrs. Kilgour.

"Yes, ma'am; there come two boats, and the captain, poor fellow, is in the last; it is a bad morning's work for him, I guess."

And then in the calmest way possible, as if shipwrecks were of daily occurrence, the two sailors discussed the probability of the captain losing his license, and wondered what the steamer was insured for.

"Here we are," said Mervyn as they pulled into the harbour; "and, Mother, look, there is Father on the pier;" at which good news poor Mrs. Kilgour became a little hysterical, but seeing that Grace was disposed to follow suit she controlled herself with an effort.

What a different landing to that Mervyn, Sydney, and Grace had imagined! They were all too intent on getting ashore to notice their surroundings or to gaze with the slightest interest on the island home they were so anxious to reach: perhaps it was as well they were too much occupied to notice anything, for in the mist that still hung

about, Jersey would not have produced a favourable impression. Her greatest charm at first sight is the brilliant colouring of the sea and the deep blue sky, and to-day the sky was a white mist, the sea a leaden gray. The tide was ebbing fast, and already low when they arrived, so they landed at a low flight of black steps, wet and shiny with long strips of sea-weed clinging to them, but all the Kilgours noticed was their father at the foot of them, looking very pale, with his close lips set closer than ever, a slight twitching at the corners of his mouth alone showing how deeply he was moved, and with what an effort he restrained his emotion.

In another moment Mrs. Kilgour was locked in her husband's arms, and then as soon as he was free Mervyn and Sydney each seized a hand, Grace and May remaining in the boat: Grace, poor child, shivering with cold and unwilling to be be seen in her scanty attire, and May unable to move without help.

"My darlings!" muttered Mr. Kilgour under his breath, brushing something very like tears from his eyes, as he went forward to help his daughters from the boat.

"Why, they have no shoes on. Mervyn, these girls can't walk, we shall have to carry them up to the carriage," said Mr. Kilgour, handing Grace out and clasping her in his arms as he did so.

"I can walk; I would rather," said Grace, rushing past Mervyn up the dirty steps, regardless of the wet and cold to her already nearly frozen feet.

"So can I," feebly whispered May, falling unconscious into her father's arms as she spoke, as

a striking proof of her strength. This rather simplified matters, for Mr. Kilgour carried her then and there to the carriage, the movement of which as soon as they started brought her back to consciousness.

"Now, shall we go to Bree's to breakfast or straight home at once? for May seems hardly able to bear the drive to Samarez; it will take about twenty minutes from here, not more," said Mr. Kilgour.

"Oh, home please," said Grace. "I have no clothes, and Ellen is only half-dressed, or May either."

"You were a little donkey to undress, Grace," said Mervyn.

"How could I tell there was going to be a shipwreck?" demanded Grace indignantly.

"You will never see your clothes again, that is very certain. I wonder if they had the grace to save Bruce, poor old fellow. However, I can't complain even if he is drowned, since none of us are."

"That is right, Mervyn. Look at it in that light; we must do the same with regard to all our baggage, which is a very serious loss to us now, when we can so ill afford it too. However, it is just possible some of the boxes and packing-cases may be recovered: the harbour-master tells me every effort will be made to save the mails, and other things too. They will telegraph at once for divers from England," said Mr. Kilgour.

"But, John, isn't it lucky—I call it providential! They all laughed at me, but it was not so stupid after all. I insured the luggage for the voyage, and I would not bring either plate or pictures.

All the jewelry that I brought over is in this bag too, so after all we sha'n't come so badly off: it is insured for fifty pounds:" said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Bravo! Mother. But is this the house?" asked Mervyn, as they turned into a gate and drove up a shingle drive to a porch.

It was a farmhouse, but, unlike most Jersey farmhouses, of modern date, and with slated roof instead of the old picturesque thatch common to many old houses in the island of no higher pretensions than a farm; the dining-room had a large bay-window, and a verandah covered with creepers ran in front of the drawing-room windows, while green jalousies, or storm-shutters as they are more often called, were at every window. There was a good-sized triangular piece of garden in front of the house, which, if wild, was well stocked with old-fashioned flowers, though at this early season only crocuses, primroses, wall-flowers, Virginian stock, daffodils, and summer-snow were yet in bloom; but even these made the garden very bright and pretty, if no more than a wilderness compared to neat English gardens.

There was no lawn, only a bed of flowers in the centre of the triangle, round which was a carriage-drive covered with shingle in place of gravel. The kitchen-garden which belonged to the Kilgours was at the side, and at the back of the house were the farm-buildings, invisible from the front garden.

"What a large house, George!" exclaimed Mrs. Kilgour as they drove up.

"Yes, but it is not all ours; all that you see belongs to us, but the back of the house we have nothing to do with; the landlord, who is a farmer,

lives there: it is quite shut off from us; in fact they were originally two houses, and there is only one door of communication between them and of that we have the key," replied Mr. Kilgour.

The ladies of the party were so exhausted with the fatigue and fright they had undergone that they went straight to bed, where they spent the day, not one of them feeling well enough to get up and explore their new home.

But Mervyn and Sydney, after eating a good breakfast, were none the worse for their adventure, which Mervyn declared, if it had not been for his mother and sisters, he should thoroughly have enjoyed. He now learned from his father that he was to go through the militia, Mr. Kilgour having already made arrangements with the authorities on the subject, had even called on the colonel to whose regiment Mervyn was to be attached as soon as the result of his preliminary examination was known.

"If you pass this you have only two more examinations, one civil and one military. You are eligible for the final from nineteen to twenty-four; so that if you work hard you may get your commission in the two years we are to live here. But to do this you will have to work, and make up your mind to decline to enter into the gaieties that go on perpetually in this place, as I am told. Moreover, I am not in a position to entertain people, so I wish you all to lead a very quiet life here, and for that reason I have refused all introductions, except to an old friend of your uncle Mervyn's, a Miss Taylor, who has lived here for years, and knows everyone."

This did not sound interesting to Mervyn, although at present he cared nothing for society, and was full of plans for boating and fishing and exploring the island by land and sea, and could not rest till he had dragged his father into St. Helier's, under pretence of telegraphing to Dr. Sandys to tell Kitty of their safe arrival.

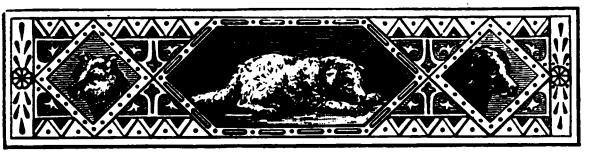
On their return they came across a gentleman and his wife in the train, who entered into conversation, and informed Mr. Kilgour they were his nearest neighbours, and hoped to have the pleasure of calling and making Mrs. Kilgour's acquaintance as soon as she was settled; to which Mr. Kilgour replied very coldly that they were very quiet people, and at present his wife was not in a condition to receive visitors. To which the lady answered in an undertone to Mervyn:

"I must know your sisters. I am so fond of young people; besides, I have heard of you from Miss Taylor. You will find your new house very comfortable with one exception—it is haunted."

"Haunted!" exclaimed Mervyn; "but I don't believe in haunted houses."

"Nor did I till some friends of mine lived in La Chasse, as your house is called, and I can tell you I would not live in it for worlds. Wait till you have been there a month, and then tell me you don't believe in haunted houses."

Mervyn endeavoured to get out of his fair companion what form the haunting took, but she would not tell him, and he went home determining to say nothing of what he had heard till some manifestation should take place.



CHAPTER V.

RINGING.

"DID you ring, ma'am?" said Ellen at the drawing-room door about nine o'clock the following evening.

"No, Ellen; perhaps it is Miss May," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"No, ma'am, I went there first; and it is not the door-bell either. I don't know the bells yet, but some one has rung several times."

"It is very odd, Ellen, for there is no one else in the house. Your master and Master Mervyn are out; you must have made a mistake."

"Oh no, ma'am, I didn't! some one rung," said Ellen, retiring rather out of temper.

The next evening about the same time Ellen appeared again with the same question, but this evening the whole family were together in the drawing-room.

"No, Ellen, we didn't ring; it must be the door-bell. Why, it is just about the time the bell rang last night," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"There is no one at the door, ma'am. These Jersey bells beat me, and when I look up

the whole of them seem to be shaking," said Ellen.

Mervyn looked up from his book at this conversation, and remembered Mrs. Graham, for that was the name of their neighbour, had said the house was haunted.

"It is some runaway playing a trick, Ellen. I will hide in the porch to-morrow evening, and I will punish my gentleman if I catch him," said Mervyn.

The next evening Mervyn was as good as his word, and although it was a cold wet night he waited from half-past eight to half-past nine in the porch, but no one came near him till Ellen came to the door to call him in.

"It is no use, Mr. Mervyn, the bell has been ringing just the same. It is my belief, sir, no human hand rings it; and what is more, sir, only I don't tell the young ladies, it rings at the dead of the night too, and again at the break of day, sir, and if this house ain't haunted my name ain't Ellen."

"Well, Ellen, you call me whenever you hear it—no matter what time it is, and if it is to be found out I'll sift it. It is some one playing a trick, I am sure," said Mervyn.

Accordingly that night and the next Ellen woke him about midnight, but though they searched the house from top to bottom, with the exception of the rooms occupied by the family, they discovered nothing except that the bells rang.

The next morning Mr. Kilgour went to England, and as Mervyn drove with him to the pier he told him of the bells and of Mrs. Graham's

speech. Mr. Kilgour pooh-poohed the matter, called Mrs. Graham a frivolous fool, hoped they would not get intimate with her, and told Mervyn to speak to Falle the landlord if they were annoyed any more by the bells, and above all not to mention it to his mother and sisters.

That very afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Graham called, bringing with them a pretty little boy about eight years old, with long golden curls, and dressed in a correct sailor's suit.

Mr. Graham was a small dapper man, rather horsey in his dress, and still more so in his conversation; so that Mervyn wondered why he lived in Jersey, where there was not a decent horse to be found. But he soon found Mr. Graham's afternoons and evenings were generally spent in billiards, whist, or écarté at the club, while his wife amused herself with afternoon teas and parties.

Mrs. Graham was one of those women who, with no pretentions to beauty, succeed in passing themselves off to the world as pretty women. Her hair, of which there was a profusion, was the same colour as her boy's, her friends said she dyed it; her eyebrows were pencilled, by herself said her friends; her eyes had the effect of being put in with a dirty finger, but the finger was not nature's; her complexion was aided by art, we will say, since we wish to be civil to her; her figure was wonderful, her dress still more so. Add to this a lively manner, plenty of conversation, with a good word for everybody, and there is Mrs. Graham.

She chatted away most pleasantly, hoped Sydney would condescend to play with her little

Hugh, who found it rather dull after school hours, as all his companions lived in town; asked May and Grace to come to afternoon tea when they liked, and hoped they would be friends as well as neighbours. And then after she had risen to leave, to Mervyn's horror she asked if they had discovered the house was haunted. Mervyn blushed and hacked and stammered, and finally muttered something about it was only a bell-wire out of order.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Graham, "what did I tell you? It is the bells, they ring at all hours of the day and night. They rang my friends out of the house at last. Old Falle will laugh at you and will do nothing; but if I were you I would have every bell taken down rather than be annoyed as the Halls were."

Of course as soon as Mrs. Graham was gone, Mrs. Kilgour and the girls insisted upon hearing all about the bells, and that night Mervyn determined to sit up in the kitchen to see what happened. At nine, and again at midnight, the bells rang as usual, and with no apparent cause. At last an idea struck Mervyn, and taking a huge weight of four pounds he tied a string from that to the clapper of the door-bell, which was the chief offender, and then amused himself with killing black beetles to await the result. About two o'clock the wires jingled, and the bell-carriage of the door-bell shook violently, though, owing to the heavy weight on the floor attached to the clapper, it could not ring. In despair Mervyn went to bed, determined to see the landlord the next morning and have it out with him. Mr.

Falle did not seem so much inclined to laugh at the matter as Mervyn had supposed; it was true he had lost his last tenants through the bells, and though a prosaic man with plenty of common sense, and as free from superstition as most men, he confessed he could not account for the ringing of the bells, but would like to see it for himself, and to that end offered to sit up all night with Mervyn, to which proposal Mervyn agreed, but owing to certain circumstances Mr. Falle was destined to have more than one companion in his vigil.

It had been arranged that Sydney, on account of his arm, should not be sent to school till the half term, so that he was at liberty to do as he liked the greater part of the day, provided he did some sums and some Latin verses every morning, which Mervyn corrected. Hitherto a great part of his time had been spent in going backwards and forwards to St. Helier's whenever anyone went, so that although little Hugh was much younger he was very glad when his mother offered him as a companion. Accordingly the day after Mrs. Graham's visit he determined to go and see if the child would go for a walk with him. He did not mention his intention to his mother, as he was not sure that it would meet with her approval; moreover, it was a Wednesday, a market-day, and he was quite sure his sisters would want him to go to town with them and carry the butter home, for neither May nor Grace could yet adopt the fashion of carrying a basket in the town, though they heard, and saw for themselves, it was a custom practised by both ladies and gentlemen, marketing being one of the

features of the place, especially on Saturday, when the market is a rendezvous for the élite, as well as for all the country-folk.

Marketing is a very wide term in Jersey. It may mean laying in a stock of provisions for the week, and it may only mean buying a bunch of flowers, but every one goes to market; and indeed in summer the fruit, flowers, and vegetables are a sight well worth seeing.

Sydney met Hugh just outside the garden gate, bent on the same errand as himself, and delighted at being asked to walk with a boy so much bigger than himself.

About an hour later there was a hue and cry raised for Sydney by his sisters, who were then starting for the market. This was the first time Grace was able to appear properly dressed since her arrival, for as we know she had nothing but a night-dress and an ulster when she left the boat. Her first two days had of necessity been spent in bed, as neither May nor her mother were in a position to lend her anything, having themselves only the clothes they were rescued in; but Mrs. Kilgour managed to get to town the day after they arrived and buy some underclothing for them all, and for the next few days Grace had to go about in her ulster until her dress was sent home from the dressmaker. She was therefore less inclined to carry home the market-basket than ever, and was seriously annoyed at Sydney's disappearance. As the two girls left the garden they met a tall thin gipsy-like woman leading a donkey in a cart filled with vegetables, on the top of which sat a little boy.

"What a Meg Merrilies!" exclaimed Grace as they drew closer to the cart, and had a closer view of the flashing black eyes and short grizzly gray hair of the gipsy, when to their astonishment, in the purest English and in a voice unmistakably that of a lady, the stranger asked:

"Can I sell you any vegetables to-day, young ladies?"

The girls replied that they had a garden, and walked on much interested in the strange being, dressed like a poor woman in the plainest style and in the coarsest materials, and yet speaking like a lady. Their business finished, they reached home a little late for their early dinner, for they dined early now they had only one servant, though Ellen of her own accord contrived to make the high tea at seven as like a dinner as possible. Indeed they led a different life altogether from their London life: they had to wait on themselves to a great extent, instead of having a servant at their beck and call for every trivial want; they also had to try and make their own clothes, or, Mrs. Kilgour declared, the fifty pounds would never supply them all with even necessary garments, and at present none of their boxes had been recovered, though the mail-bags had been picked up some days before.

Sydney did not return to dinner, to the astonishment of all, but they were not seriously alarmed till, about three in the afternoon, Mrs. Graham called to ask if Hugh was with them, and seemed much distressed to find he was not.

"He left the house as usual for school this morning, and he has not been seen since. I sent

in to town to see if he was kept in, but he had not been to school to-day."

"We met a strange gipsy this morning. Do you think there is a gang about? He might be stolen," was Grace's cheerful suggestion.

"Oh, no! that is not a gipsy; that is poor Meg Merrilies. She is a lady, daughter of a doctor here, with a very sad story. Oh, no! She picks up waifs and strays, and 'loves them into shape.' But about Hugh. You say your little brother is missing too; so perhaps they have gone out together and lost their way. I shall send for a carriage and drive all over the island till I find them. Come with me, will you?" said Mrs. Graham.

Under the circumstances Mrs. Kilgour allowed May to go, keeping Grace with her, while Mervyn went off in search of the boys in another direction. All that afternoon was spent in looking for them; May and Mrs. Graham driving, Mrs. Kilgour and Grace walking, and Mervyn instituting all kinds of inquiries, and succeeding so far as to trace them to the town station, beyond which nothing was heard of them. It was seven o'clock, and nearly dark, when they all returned. Mrs. Graham went into hysterics when she found her boy was still missing, and the Kilgours now began to be seriously frightened about Sydney, the only comfort being that the boys were evidently together. Mervyn started again on rather a wild-goose chase as soon as he had had some tea, and then began a tedious evening of hoping and fearing for Mrs. Kilgour and the girls. It was a wild night, too, which added to their anxiety. The wind was blowing furiously, and occasional

hailstones threatened to break every pane of glass in the greenhouse. The storm-shutters preserved the windows in the house. But the rattling of doors and windows with every gust was terrible to any nervous person like Mrs. Kilgour.

About eight o'clock Mr. Falle came in to begin his investigation of the bell mystery. He brought his son with him, and a quantity of rags and clothes, with which they proceeded to tie up every bell-clapper, so that it was impossible for the bells to ring. About nine o'clock May started up from her chair in the drawing-room, and pointing to the handle of the bell, which was moving up and down, exclaimed: "Oh, Mother, look!"

"It is nothing, May. Mr. Falle is probably pulling the wires. Don't be foolish," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Did you touch the bell, ma'am?" said Ellen, appearing.

"No, Ellen, it is some one at the hall-door. Master Sydney, perhaps," said Mrs. Kilgour, and they all rushed to the front-door to see. The porch was empty, and no one was to be seen in the garden, while Mr. Falle was standing in the kitchen holding his sides, and laughing immoderately to see the bells all shaking, the wires jingling, and no one able to account for it. At ten o'clock Mervyn came in, wet through, with no news of the boys, and reported Mrs. Graham was so ill that the doctor had been sent for, and Mr. Graham was almost beside himself. Nothing more could be done, however, till the morning; but no one was inclined to go to bed while they were in such a state of uncertainty as to Sydney's

safety. So the hours moved slowly on, the two girls trying to work, and assuming a confidence that all would come right which they were far from feeling, to reassure their mother, who roamed all over the house like a restless spirit, endeavouring to fix the windows so that they should not rattle, and trying to account for every noise she heard, while Mervyn kept watch on the bells, which were very lively, with Mr. Falle.

"Oh, dear! I really think I shall go mad, what with the wind roaring, and the hail, every window and door rattling, unearthly noises everywhere, and then these wretched bells behaving in this idiotic way, and to crown all, Sydney lost," said poor Mrs. Kilgour between twelve and one, when the bells had been working harder than ever for some minutes. As she spoke a loud knocking was heard at the hall door.

But to return to the boys, whom we left starting for a walk.

"Won't you have to go and ask leave?" suggested Sydney to his companion.

"Oh, no! I go where I like. I have not been to school to-day. Mother thinks I am there. As long as I am home to dinner it will be all right," said Hugh.

"Now I should like to go to Elizabeth Castle, if you can walk as far," said Sydney.

"Can't I? I am a very good walker, and it just will be fine, if the bridge is only open. Do let's go. Look! there is the train; it is only a penny each, second class, unless you are over twelve. We can go by train to town to save time."

Sydney agreed, and the pair set off. To Hugh's joy the bridge was open; but whether the tide was coming out or going in they neither knew nor cared. In fact, Sydney did not know what was meant by the expression, not having grasped the idea that the castle was surrounded at high-water, the bridge being only open at certain stages of the tide.

It was a very windy morning, and as they walked over the wet sand and sea-weed to the castle Sydney could not help feeling a fear he was ashamed to confess, lest the long rolling white waves on either side of them, as they got further from shore, should meet and swallow them up, as the Red Sea swallowed up the Egyptians.

However, nothing of the kind happened, and they reached the castle in safety. The wind was higher than ever here, and Hugh proposed that they should go at once to the breakwater to watch the sea, to which Sydney agreed; and there they stayed, oblivious of everything, watching the waves dashing over the stones of the wall originally intended as the new harbour, but which had been left unfinished, the winds and waves having successfully baffled all the engineers. It was a splendid sight; the bright blue sky overhead, with great white clouds chasing each other across it, and all round them the sea, green and purple, with large white waves flashing in the sunlight, while to the far west a great black mass of cloud was forming, the sea beneath being of a pale sea-green, and round them whistled and roared the wind louder at every gust till, for fear of being blown into the sea, they left the break-

water and made their way to the Hermitage Rock, where they found a sheltered corner to bait their breath, which the wind had almost blown out of them. Then they found a tiny cove where they could lie safely and yet get a good blow, which they thoroughly enjoyed, and watch the sea dash over the rocks. At last they grew so hungry that they began to think of going home to dinner, though, if they had only known it, it was long past their dinner-hour. Back to the entrance they wended their steps, but on arriving there found the tide had completely covered the bridge in their absence.

"Why, the bridge has gone!" exclaimed Sydney. "I suppose the rough sea has covered it."

"No; it is always covered at high-water. We shall have to wait till the tide is low again, or else go home by boat," said little Hugh.

"I dare not go by boat in such a sea as this. We had better wait. Perhaps the tide will soon go down enough for us to cross," said Sydney, who was even more ignorant than his little friend of the nature of tides.

"I wish we could get something to eat; I am so hungry," said little Hugh, looking ready to cry.

"Never mind," said Sydney, "we shall have plenty to eat when we get home. Let's go back and wait in the Hermitage; it is sheltered there, and it is beginning to rain."

Hugh agreed, and they retired to the cave in the Hermitage Rock, from which they emerged from time to time to look at the sea, which, as the wind increased and the tide rose, grew higher and

rougher. Thus they spent the afternoon until the sunset-gun fired from the castle warned them how late it was getting.

"Oh, Sydney, there is the gun! It will be dark soon. What shall we do? I dare not walk across the bridge after dark. We might lose our way," said Hugh.

"We will go and have another look. Perhaps it is open now," said Sydney. But on reaching the bridge they found the sea had risen much higher since their last visit.

Hugh's courage now failed him, and he began to cry bitterly; so that Sydney, feeling he must do something, asked a sentinel when the bridge would be clear again.

"Not for another three hours. The tide has only just begun to ebb. How did you come here, sir?" asked the man.

"We walked across about twelve o'clock this morning, and we have had nothing to eat since breakfast," said Sydney.

"You can't go by boat either, our boat has not been able to cross all day, and the wind is rising. The best thing you can do, sir, is to go to the castle and ask to see one of the officers—young Mr. Davy or the doctor," suggested the gunner.

Very much against his will, Sydney, seeing there was nothing else to be done, made his way to the castle, leading the weeping Hugh with him, and asked boldly for Mr. Davy. To his relief a young officer, scarcely older than Mervyn, appeared, and hearing what had befallen the boys, asked them into his quarters. Happily it turned out that he knew Mrs. Graham very well, and

offered to walk back with them that night as soon as the bridge was clear.

This was a very great relief; but the most pressing needs of the boys just then were hunger and thirst, and it had not yet occurred to their host, who had just dined very well himself, to offer them any food.

"May we have some water to drink, please?" said Sydney at last, unable to wait any longer.

"To be sure. Are you hungry, too?" asked their host.

"Yes, rather. We have had nothing all day," said Sydney. Upon which Mr. Davy, abusing himself for his want of hospitality, ordered some refreshment, to which the boys did ample justice.

Sydney's next feeling, now his troubles seemed fairly over, was one of great thankfulness that his father was not at home, for he would have blamed him for going off with the little truant Hugh, and Sydney hated to offend his father.

It was blowing hard, and hailing and raining alternately, when at about half-past ten o'clock Mr. Davy set out with a boy on either side of him. It was by no means a pleasant walk, the road being very rough, and that night it was so dark they were in constant danger of stumbling over a rock or plunging into a pool. Hugh was so tired, too, that Mr. Davy was obliged to carry him on his back a great part of the way. At last after an hour's hard work they reached the beach in safety; and Mr. Davy, having taken them to the nearest livery-stables, put them into a carriage and sent them home, being himself anxious

to get back as soon as possible to his comfortable quarters out of the boisterous night.

Sydney took Hugh home first, and then finding no one paid any attention to his repeated rings at his own door, took to kicking instead of ringing. This was the knocking that had so startled his mother. His appearance was a signal for general rejoicing, though Mrs. Kilgour mingled scolding with her welcome, until she heard the whole story, when they all acknowledged Sydney was not much to blame, except for having taken little Graham with him without first asking his mother.

"Young scamp, he ought to be whipped," said Mervyn when he heard of Master Hugh's conduct.

But Hugh was too much spoilt to be punished; on the contrary, he was petted tremendously, Mr. and Mrs. Graham attributing all blame to Sydney, who was blissfully unconscious of their anger.

Soon after Sydney's return they all went to bed, the landlord declaring the bells were a mystery to him; and as he could do nothing with them, he would send for a bell-hanger the next day.

Next morning the bell-hanger came and took all the bells away; but that night the wires rattled and the handles moved up and down the same as ever, and Ellen became so frightened that Mrs. Kilgour lived in hourly dread lest she should give notice to leave; and Mr. Falle, fearing he should lose his tenants, lost his temper, stormed at the bell-hanger, told him he did not understand his business, and he would never employ him again, and finally sent to town for

another bell-hanger, who was reported to be a very intelligent man.

The new bell-hanger having examined the bells declared the matter to be very simple, and undertook to put it to rights in a few hours. All that was necessary was to detach some lead-piping which came in contact with the bell-wires below, and probably caused an electric current which rang the bells. In a few hours the piping was detached, and the bell-hanger went back to town much satisfied with his morning's work, and with his own cleverness in so soon discovering the cause of the annoyance. His self-congratulations, nevertheless, turned out to be premature, for the bell-wires were pulled by some invisible power as furiously as ever that night.

Mr. Falle was furious. De Faye, the new bell-hanger was sent for and told he no more understood his business than his predecessor. De Faye still persisted in saying he would cure the bells before he had done with them. Accordingly he cut some wires and altered others; that was no good, they jingled more than ever, the bell-handles worked up and down, and the bell-carriages shook; nothing De Faye could think of, and he came up daily with a fresh idea, had any effect on these mysterious bells. At last Mr. Falle took it into his head that Mervyn or Sydney, or perhaps both, were playing him a trick; and determined to put a stop to this, he requested Mrs. Kilgour to send for her husband. Mrs. Kilgour, though certain her boys had nothing to do with the bell-ringing, was by no means averse to sending for Mr. Kilgour, for she had fully made up her mind, unless

the mystery were solved, nothing should induce her to remain at La Chasse, much as she liked the house.

It happened that Mr. Kilgour was able to come over at once, and as soon as he arrived was besieged on all sides with accounts of the mystery; Mr. Falle declaring he felt sure the young gentlemen knew more than they chose to say about it; but on being questioned by their father they stoutly maintained their innocence, and Mr. Kilgour firmly believed them, though as unable as any one else to account for the mystery.

About six o'clock on the evening of Mr. Kilgour's arrival, De Faye, bringing a little boy with him, came to say a new idea had occurred to him, and he thought at last he had found a remedy. He had not been ten minutes in the kitchen, where Sydney, Ellen, and the boy were watching his proceedings, when the rest of the family, who were in the drawing-room, heard shrieks from the kitchen, and the boy dashed past them out of the house as fast as his legs could carry him, as white as a ghost. On reaching the kitchen to discover what had happened, Mr. Kilgour found Sydney in fits of laughter, Ellen crying, and the bell-hanger looking at his hand, which was all torn and bleeding.

"What is the matter now?" asked Mr. Kilgour, who was disposed to think the matter of little consequence.

"Hanged if I know, sir! and I was very nearly hanged just now. I was winding this wire, which was hanging down round my hand, when I was pulled pretty nigh up to the ceiling," said the man.

"Very strange!" muttered Mr. Kilgour, who now began to think De Faye was playing a trick on them, even at the expense of his own hand.

"But I'll be even with them yet. I am going to burn the wires, sir; I shall make them red-hot and try what that will do," said De Faye; and he carried out his intention at once, heating the wires red-hot in various places. Contrary to the wishes of some and perhaps to the expectation of every one except Mr. Kilgour, De Faye, and the landlord, this plan was so far effective that no jingling or disturbance of any kind was heard that night, and the next day the wires were all mended and the bells rehung; and still, to the astonishment of the family, they behaved in a most exemplary manner, and from that day forward, so long as the Kilgours remained at La Chasse, the bells never gave them any more trouble. The mystery always remained a mystery, except perhaps to Mr. Falle, who always persisted in declaring that Mervyn had a hand in the matter, or why, he argued, should the ringing have ceased as soon as Mr. Kilgour appeared?



CHAPTER VI.

DRIFTING.

MR. KILGOUR brought good news of Kitty with him. She was getting on as well as could be wished and was very happy with Dr. Sandys, though, of course, she had fretted a little when they all left for Jersey. She now rarely complained of pain in her back, which convinced Dr. Sandys part of her illness, as he had suspected, was mere nervousness. Another good piece of news Mr. Kilgour brought with him was that Mervyn had passed his preliminary, and passed very well too, so he was now able to begin his drills; and lest he should be idle his father insisted on his learning French, and besides this, going to a "coach" once a week.

Finding that masters were very cheap in Jersey, Mr. Kilgour engaged a tutor for Sydney till he was able to go to school, and arranged that Grace should work with him for two hours every day, and before he went back to London he engaged a music-master and a German mistress for her as well, so that she could not justly complain

that her education was being neglected. And though Miss Grace gave herself great airs at first, she soon found her new instructors were quite competent to teach her for the present, though a few months ago she would have scouted such an idea as preposterous. The tutor, who was a young Jersey man, was likely to have rather a lively time of it after his pupils were grown accustomed to him, between Grace's airs and Sydney's idleness; and before he had taught them a month he complained almost daily to Mrs. Kilgour of their inattention. At last he gave it up as hopeless, and hearing Mr. Kilgour was likely to be over in June he quietly made up his mind to bide his time. Quite unsuspected by either of his pupils he kept an accurate account of their misdemeanours, and promised himself much satisfaction in showing this report to Mr. Kilgour on his return.

About three weeks after the wreck of the steamer all hope of recovering more than the two or three boxes belonging to the Kilgours which had been found shortly after the accident, was given up, and they resigned themselves to their losses, perhaps with the greater equanimity since those things which had turned up were so damaged by the salt water as to be almost useless. Poor May considered herself the greatest sufferer, because a few of Harry's letters, all she had, and one or two photographs of him, had gone to the bottom, never to be seen again; and as she said, if it had only been her clothes she would not have cared, but these were far more valuable than any clothes, besides (for May was apt to be

superstitious where her lover was concerned), perhaps it was a bad omen.

In spite of Mr. Kilgour's wish to live very quietly a great many people called on them, and Mrs. Kilgour and May were kept pretty well occupied in returning visits; after which came invitations to picnics, afternoon parties, and one or two dances, all of which Mrs. Kilgour declined for herself and daughters, but allowed Mervyn to accept. Their chief friend was Miss Taylor, who constantly came to see them, and kept them *au courant* with all the news, or rather gossip, of the island; for though fairly up in the fifties, she was asked everywhere, and generally went where she was asked. Miss Taylor, probably for reasons of her own, had taken a great dislike to the Grahams, and warned Mrs. Kilgour more than once not to allow her girls to become too intimate with them.

"I don't think Mother need be alarmed on that score, Miss Taylor, for though I rather like Mrs. Graham, I am not going to make a friend of her," said May.

"I should hope not, May," interrupted Grace; "she is such bad style, and so is her house."

"What is the house like? I should like to know, for I have never called on her and I don't mean to," said Miss Taylor.

"Well," said Grace, "to begin with, a queer-looking creature in a very shabby dress, and a very smart muslin apron and cap dabbed about with dirty ribbons, opens the door to you. Then you go into the hall, which is hung with stuffed birds, horns, stuffed fish, Japanese umbrellas, about

forty walking-sticks, whips, old guns, and other odds and ends, all very dusty. Then you come to some dirty white muslin curtains looped up over a door, under which you dive, and then the girl pulls some more dirty curtains aside from another door and announces you."

"Really, Grace, how you notice things! I am sure I don't remember all this," said May.

"I do; I don't go about in a dream. Then the drawing-room is a curiosity; there is scarcely a piece of real furniture in it except the chairs and a sofa, nothing but gimcrack tables and two-penny halfpenny ornaments; the walls are hung with china plates, not one worth a shilling, with bits of cotton velvet at the back of them; and Japanese fans and screens are stuck all over the room. I don't say there is no taste in the arrangement; there is, but it is bad taste. I forgot: the chimney-piece is done up with a quantity of cheap lace, and if there is one thing I hate more than another it is imitation lace or imitation anything; and the whole house strikes me as being a sham, and I hate shams."

"My dear, I believe the Grahams themselves are shams; they came here without introductions, and who they are, and how they got into society, no one knows; they will disappear one day and leave nothing but bills and that trumpery furniture behind them, you'll see. I know this place so well," said Miss Taylor.

Oddly enough, a week later Mervyn came in one day with the news that the Grahams had gone off in the night by a potato-boat, leaving all their bills, some to a large amount, behind

them unpaid. This made Mrs. Kilgour very thankful that May had never cultivated Mrs. Graham's acquaintance; indeed she did not care for society, and was content to amuse herself with quiet excursions with her brothers and Grace to different parts of the island. After their London life they thoroughly enjoyed the walks into the valleys, where they would light a fire, boil the kettle and have tea, as soon as the days grew warm enough, which they did by the end of May. Or another favourite plan was to take their luncheon with them and go by train, sometimes to the east, sometimes to the south end of the island, and picnic in one of the bays along the coast. At first they were content to walk or go by train, and had agreed to their mother's wish to wait till their father came for his holiday before making any boat excursions or taking any drives; but one hot Saturday at the beginning of June a desire to go by boat to some rocks near Samarez seized Mervyn, and he implored his mother to consent.

It was Sydney's and Grace's holiday, he urged, and they all wanted to go somewhere, and it was so hot to walk, besides May was so lazy she declined to walk further than down to the beach; might not they take their luncheon in a boat and eat it on one of those rocks you could see so plainly from the beach, and which Mervyn was certain were only about half a mile from the shore?

Mrs. Kilgour raised numerous objections to the plan, all of which Mervyn combated successfully.

"Why can't you eat your luncheon on the

beach, instead of wanting to go to those wretched rocks?" urged Mrs. Kilgour; but this suggestion was received with the utmost scorn; there was no fun in that, the beach was much too near home, and too public a place.

"Well, you may go if Mr. Falle says it is safe," said Mrs. Kilgour at last.

Now Mervyn and Mr. Falle had never been on good terms with each other since the bell episode, and he flatly refused to ask old Falle's advice on any subject.

"Besides, he is out in his potato-field, packing potatoes with a whole troop of boys and girls, and men and women, all working as if their lives depended on taking up so many cabots a day. I am sure he would grudge the moment it would take to answer my question. Seeing I am a 'wet bob' too, I should think I understand boating far better than that old idiot."

It was useless for Mrs. Kilgour to urge that river-boating was very different to sea-boating; that the Jersey coast, as they knew to their cost, was most dangerous; that Mervyn understood nothing about tides or currents: they were all bent on going, and even May seemed to desire it, so that at last Mrs. Kilgour gave a reluctant consent.

The luncheon-basket was soon packed, with a bottle of milk for the girls and some bottled beer for the boys, and in high glee they set off through the Samarez lanes down to the beach, which was about ten minutes' walk from La Chasse. Here they hired a boat which certainly was, as Mervyn said, a regular tub, and they probably could not

have upset it if they tried, so there seemed little fear of their coming to any harm in it. The baskets were soon put in, and May being comfortably seated, prepared to enjoy herself to her heart's content dreaming of Harry Brand; Grace steered, Sydney lay at the bottom of the boat, and Mervyn, looking very well in his flannels, took the oars.

"How's the tide?" asked Mervyn as the boatman shoved the boat off.

"Just turned, sir; it was high-water at twelve," said the man.

"And it is now half-past," said Mervyn. "We shall just drift down with the tide, it will be easy enough going down, but I shall find it rather hard work pulling you all back against the tide in this heavy craft."

"Never mind about coming back," said May, giving herself up to the delicious sensation of drifting lazily across the smooth sea, calm as a lake to-day, and blue as the cloudless sky above them, only with a different blue.

The rocks they proposed landing on were straight ahead of them, as they steered a little to the south-west, and in reality about two miles from the shore. All this eastern side of the island is surrounded by a most effectual and natural defence of long ridges of rocks, some only visible at low-water, others remaining high and dry at the highest tides. The cluster they wished to reach contained one or two good-sized rocks, large enough to hold a larger party than they were, but certainly not easy to land on except by rather expert climbers, and this the Kilgours were fast

becoming, having already had plenty of practice during the time they had been in the island. They continued to glide smoothly on for about half an hour, Mervyn taking it quietly and availing himself as much as possible of the ebbing tide, but they did not seem to get much nearer the rocks. Suddenly a grating sound was heard, and they found they had passed over a sunken rock, the top of which had scraped against the bottom of the boat.

"Hulloa! Grace, what are you doing? Mind where you are steering us to," cried Mervyn.

"I can't help it, Mervyn; how should I see a rock that is under water? We seem to be in a nest of them here. Sydney, you come and steer and I'll lean over the bows, and call out when we are near a rock: fortunately the sea is so clear I shall be able to see easily."

This somewhat primitive plan of navigating was adopted, and for the next hour Grace sat, or rather knelt, in the bows, and shouted directions to Sydney, who now had charge of the rudder. As they grew close to the spot they had selected they found there was a narrow channel between two of the largest masses of granite, but it was impassable from the side they were on, so they rowed carefully up to the big rock as near as they safely could, but found it was impossible to land from the shore side. To get round the rock they had to make a little detour, which, however, they accomplished safely, and at last Mervyn succeeded in grasping a small prominence and declared they could land there, but both Grace and May declined to attempt it.

"We must try another place then. Now if we can run the boat into that channel, do you think you girls could climb on to that smaller rock? If you can't, we must give it up and lunch in the boat," said Mervyn.

The girls thought they could manage this, so the boat was with some difficulty turned into the narrow channel. Mervyn shipped his oars, and sprung on to the rock with a loud huzza, keeping hold of the boat all the time for fear it should drift away.

"Now, Grace, come next; give me your hand and jump, or you will wet your feet: lucky you girls have old clothes on. Now, Syd, mind your arm; and May, hand up the baskets; that is all right; now come yourself; there you are, May; I told you to be careful. Why, your feet must be wet through."

"Ah! well, it can't be helped, they are old boots," said May calmly, as she scrambled into a dry corner.

"Now, how are you going to fasten the boat, Mervyn?"

"I don't quite know; my back is breaking with stooping over it now. Here, Grace, can you catch hold of it for a minute while I get hold of the rope: that will do; now I must find a piece of rock to fasten it on; if not, we shall have to hold it ourselves, which will be a nuisance. You can be unpacking the baskets, for I am dying of thirst," said Mervyn, clambering about with the rope in his hand, finally succeeding in making it fast to his stick, which he fixed firmly in a crevice of the rock; and then sprung up to join the others, who

had climbed to the top, where there was a flat piece of granite which served as a table, and various niches which made excellent chairs. Here on this rock, with the sea surrounding them, it required but a very slight effort of the imagination to fancy themselves on a desert island, as Sydney suggested.

"Don't talk of shipwrecks, pray, Sydney; we have had one real one; I am sure we don't want another," said Grace.

"I don't think it would be bad fun if we had plenty of food and some rugs, and if it were fine weather, to spend two or three days on this rock," said Sydney.

"Two or three hours will be long enough for me, so I hope that jolly old boat won't break loose while we are here; I think she is pretty safe though," said Mervyn, helping himself to a pile of sandwiches.

"I wonder if anyone has ever had a meal on this rock before!" said Grace.

"Don't suggest anything so prosaic, Grace; the charm of the whole thing is to think we are lunching on a rock in the midst of the sea, never yet visited by any one more important than sea-gulls and divers," said Mervyn.

"And diverse other picnic parties most likely," said Sydney, for which attempt at a pun Mervyn caught him in his arms and threatened to throw him into the sea.

"We are certainly not the only human beings that have ever set foot here, because ages ago this was part of France," said Grace.

"Ages ago indeed! in pre-Adamite ages, I sus-

pect," said Mervyn. "Go and look after that old tub, young Syd; that arm of yours is nearly well now, you can make yourself useful."

Sydney went and soon reported that the boat was all right, so they decided to rest for an hour and then start for the shore, which Mervyn calculated would take them two hours to reach, as the tide would be dead against them. As they rested Grace and Sydney entertained the others with an account of the way they treated their unfortunate tutor, the tricks they played him, the *hauteur* with which Grace treated him, the maximum of work which Sydney consented to do for him.

"It would be a pleasant thing for both of you if he should take it into his head to tell Father when he comes at the end of this month," said Mervyn.

"Do you think he is likely to?" asked Grace.

"I can't say; I know I should if I were he; at least I should tell of you and lick Sydney myself," was Mervyn's answer, after which the culprits were both somewhat silent for a while.

At three o'clock they all moved reluctantly to the boat, which had not left them in the lurch, and after some little delay succeeded in getting it off, and Mervyn rowed them carefully round the rock and made for the shore. He soon found the tide was running very fast and he made but little progress against it. Half-an-hour's hard rowing took them but very little way, and at last Mervyn rested on his oars.

"What a strong current there is here! Look, Mervyn, we are drifting back," cried Grace.

"So I see," said Mervyn briefly, applying himself to the oars again.

"We don't seem to me to make any progress," said Grace, after another quarter of an hour's steady pulling.

"Nonsense, Grace!" said Mervyn angrily; "we must be getting nearer the shore."

"We are not, though; on the contrary, I believe we are getting nearer the rocks we have just left," said Grace.

"Well, one of you must come and take an oar; I am getting so tired. Is there any beer left?" asked Mervyn.

Fortunately there was, and May gave him some, while Grace took an oar.

This arrangement lasted for about twenty minutes, when May, who had been watching their progress intently for some minutes, said:

"Mervyn, dear, we are not moving an inch. If we are moving at all we are drifting nearer the rocks."

"Yes, we are," said Mervyn. "The tide is carrying us out to sea, I am afraid, and I am getting so tired I can't pull a bit. May, could you take my oar for a few minutes? Perhaps if I rest I shall be able to get the boat out of this current."

May took Mervyn's place, and both she and Grace did their utmost for ten minutes or more, when, finding they were losing ground, Mervyn suggested they should lie at anchor till he was rested; so he attempted to make the anchor firm, but whether the rope was too short, or the ground beneath them too rocky, the anchor would not hold fast, and in despair Mervyn took the oars

again, and told Sydney, who had the rudder, to alter her course, and instead of steering straight for the shore to try a slanting course and steer due east instead of north. For a few strokes this seemed to succeed better, but in five minutes' time they all agreed they were not moving.

"Steer west, Sydney; take her round gently," said Mervyn.

They got her round, but they could not move her any further in a westward direction than in any other.

"Oh! Mervyn, what shall we do?" cried May, looking very pale and frightened.

"I don't know," said Mervyn; "all I know is we sha'n't be able to get her a foot nearer the shore till the tide turns, and that won't be for another two hours, meanwhile the danger is that we shall be carried out to sea."

"Is there really any danger then, Mervyn? Oh! how I wish we had never come! Nothing, no, nothing shall ever induce me to go in a boat again," said Grace.

"Oh, Mervyn dear, I feel so faint!" said May.

"Do be quiet, Grace; you are frightening May into a fit. Here, Syd, never mind the rudder, there is some beer left in that bottle, give it to May; and May, you must *not* faint, or you will really put us in danger, for if we have to attend to you we can't go on rowing; and the only real danger is that we shall all get exhausted and be carried out to sea. Is there any cake or a biscuit left? if so, Sydney, give it to May," said Mervyn, who was really worn out with his exertions in rowing, and had enough to do to prevent the others from

seeing his anxiety lest they should be carried out to sea; and then without provisions or wraps, and on a strange coast, the consequences would be very serious in a little boat such as they were in now, especially with a delicate girl like May, or even with Grace, who was by no means robust.

Then, too, a gale might at any moment spring up and dash them against a rock, or drive them into the middle of the Atlantic; altogether they were in by no means a pleasant position. And the irritating part of it was, they could actually see their own chimneys from the boat, and were so close to the shore that they could distinguish figures of people walking on the beach. Although it was so fine a day, no boats were in sight, this part of the island not being much frequented by pleasure-boats and the fishing-boats all being out at sea, probably waiting for the tide to turn, when they would run in with it.

May swallowed the beer and Mervyn's reproof, and made a successful effort at checking her faintness.

"There, I am better now," said May, wiping away some tears; "let me take an oar again, Mervyn, I should rather like to do something, I don't feel so frightened then."

"Mervyn, I believe I could pull though my arm is so weak and stiff; may I try?" asked Sydney.

Mervyn, who felt he must rest for a time or break down altogether, agreed to this, and Sydney and May each took an oar and pulled as well as they could, though Sydney was soon obliged to give up.

"Let us all shout our hardest," said Grace, taking Sydney's oar; "perhaps some one on the beach may hear us; we can but try."

Accordingly they all shouted as loud as they could at intervals, and Mervyn tied a white handkerchief to his stick and waved it over his head in the vain hope of attracting some one's attention.

"If Mother were only on the beach she would be sure to see us," said May.

"Yes; but she is not likely to be there, for I was afraid she would be so nervous that I told her not to expect us till five or six, really meaning to get back sooner," said Mervyn, frantically waving his impromptu flag.

"Besides, Mother is going for a drive with Miss Taylor, and won't be home much before six," said Grace, "so there is no chance of her sending a boat after us."

"I should almost think they might see us from the fort, if they have a good glass, which they are certain to have, so keep on raising signals of distress: here, May, you take the flag; I'll take the oars again now for a turn; I am rested a little. I wish there was some more beer, or milk, or even water," said Mervyn, taking the oars again.

He pulled with a will for a few minutes, but all his labour only appeared to keep them from drifting out to sea, and he was now so exhausted he could not go on pulling more than ten minutes, when the girls relieved him. Grace's sentiment that she wished they had never come was now openly shared by the whole party; and Mervyn, who had planned the expedition, was secretly blaming himself severely for his folly in having

undertaken such an excursion, though it was probable he would not confess so much to his brother and sisters, even at the last extremity, when rescue was impossible. The only person to whom he would be likely to acknowledge he had been wrong in pretending to understand sea-boating was his father, whom it seemed probable he would never see again.

The afternoon wore on, and the strength of the two girls and of Mervyn wore out, and at last May suggested they should cease rowing and resign themselves to their fate; which seemed inevitable, as they all three lay back exhausted, while Sydney stood up and strained every nerve in the hope of seeing a boat even in the dim distance.

What a dreadful fate it was too! Drifting away into the great unknown. And this within sight, almost within call, of their own home. To see the shore gradually melt away, and then the fort, and even the rocks they were now so close to, till they were surrounded by sea—sea and sky, sky and sea, nothing else visible except an occasional sea-gull or perhaps a porpoise. And all the while the sun shining brightly, the sky cloudless, the sea smiling treacherously at them; all nature speaking of life and hope and joy on this bright June day, and these four young things, with infinite capacity for enjoying life and its pleasures, were being carried away to death, a slow, lingering, and yet almost certain death.

The afternoon was now in its prime, but in a few hours the sun would set, leaving behind him for a few minutes his train of purple and gold, and gilding with a transient glory the cruel sea

that was bearing them on its bosom away into the chill dark night, whither they knew not; away, far, far away, through the waters of darkness and the sea of death, and still on and on till they reach the golden sea whose waves beat on the eternal shore. What a fate! Grand and terrible. But stay, that is one aspect of the picture only; we have not looked on the other: the chill night air, the darkness, the awful silence, the failing strength, the dreadful thirst, the terrible wondering how it would all end, who would go first, or would a great wave come and swallow them all up together?

Drifting! Drifting!! Drifting!!! What a text! What a sermon might be preached on it!





CHAPTER VII.

A LOBSTER-POT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART.

"HURRAH!" shouted Sydney suddenly; "a boat! a boat!"

"Where? And don't upset this one in your excitement," said Mervyn, jumping up to look and see if the good news were true.

"There," said Sydney, pointing to a boat which had just put out from Pontac, and was about two miles from them.

"So there is, it is going out to sea; if we can only manage to make them hear or see us, we are saved," said Mervyn. "Now, it is no use shouting yet, they are too far off to hear us, but we must go on making signs. I'll row again now, hope has given me fresh strength, and you all wave your handkerchiefs as hard as you can till they see you."

Then came a quarter of an hour of great anxiety lest the boat should not see them, and should not come in their direction, for it seemed at first to be going straight out to sea; then hope revived and they all thought she was coming to-

wards them, to sink again the next minute when they were sure she was going in the opposite direction. Then they thought the two men who were in the boat saw their signals, then again they were sure they didn't; at last to their joy one man waved his hat.

"They see us at last," cried May.

"Never mind," said Mervyn, "go on signalling or they won't understand we are in distress and want them to help us. As soon as they get a little nearer we will shout to them."

"They really are coming to us now," cried Grace. "Oh! how glad I am! I never felt so glad in all my life, except when we landed on the pier that day."

As soon as the boat was within ear-shot they all shouted, and kept shouting till the men answered them. Then the boat came closer and closer, and at last they were within speaking distance.

"What is the matter, sir?" shouted one man.

"We are drifting out to sea, the tide is too strong for me to row against it; we have been here for about two hours," explained Mervyn.

"You have not much strength left by the look of you now, sir; let me get alongside, and my mate will wait here for me while I see what is wrong."

"Oh! but you must take us home before you go away, please. We'll pay you well," said May.

"Oh yes, miss," said the man, as the boats came within reach of each other. "Why, what is wrong with your rudder, sir? Bless me, here's a start!

you are anchored on a lobster-pot." And turning to his mate, who was a Jerseyman and could not speak English, he described the situation in Jersey-French, much to the amusement of both.

"Anchored on a lobster-pot! What do you mean?" cried Mervyn.

"See! your rudder had caught in a lobster-trap, no wonder you could not move; we put them down all about here for the lobsters. Maybe it was lucky for you, for the tide is very strong here, and as likely as not but for that you might have been carried out to sea. There, you are all right now, sir. Do you think you can manage to row the ladies back?"

"I think so," said Mervyn.

"No, no, I am sure he can't; don't leave us pray, get in and row us ashore," cried May, and both Grace and Sydney echoed her cry; and at last the fisherman stepped into their boat, and taking the oars pulled strongly and steadily towards the shore. In less than an hour he landed them safely on the beach, where the two girls, worn out with suspense, fear, and exhaustion, lay down almost insensible, while Mervyn ran home for assistance. Mrs. Kilgour had just come in from her drive, and was still talking to Miss Taylor in the carriage, when Mervyn came up and explained what had happened.

"Drive to the beach, coachman; we will fetch the poor girls," said Miss Taylor; and they drove off at once for them. The sight of their mother made both the girls burst into tears, which did them good, and they soon recovered sufficiently to get into the carriage and drive home, where

they had tea, after which they did not seem much the worse for their adventure.

"May," said Mervyn a few days after, "do you care to see old Falle raise the 'clameur de Haro?'"

"I don't know what it is. Is it worth seeing?" asked May languidly, looking up from her embroidery, and rousing herself from a day-dream of Harry Brand.

"It is an old Norman law. I'll explain it to you as we go. Yes, it will be worth something to see that old sinner on his knees, and it is not far; only be quick, it will be over by twelve o'clock."

May, more to oblige Mervyn than to please herself, complied, and fetching a hat and gloves, declared herself ready to accompany him.

"I hope it is not far, Mervyn, it is frightfully hot," said May as she followed Mervyn through the farmyard.

"Oh no! it is only across this potato-field, where you see those men at work building a wall; the land belongs to old Falle, but he has let it for years to an English officer with that house to the right. Well, the Englishman wishes to make a walled-in garden, and old Falle won't allow him; however the Englishman persists, so he is going to raise the 'clameur de Haro' this morning. Here he comes. Look, we are just in time: those two men with him are the witnesses. Now we shall see and hear the old idiot. Look, May," said Mervyn, as Mr. Falle walked up to the Englishman, who, with a cigar in his mouth, appeared rather to enjoy the proceedings.

"I call upon you to desist from building this wall," said the Jerseyman, and then removing his

hat and kneeling down on the ground he cried out, "Haro! Haro! à mon aide mon prince," when the builders with one consent threw down their tools and ceased working.

"Can't they go on working now?" asked May.

"No; the property is now supposed to be under the protection of the king. Old Falle has to go to the Greffe within twenty-four hours and lodge a declaration, or the proceedings are annulled. I should like to lock him up for twenty-four hours, just for the fun of seeing him go through the performance again. I wonder he should like to make such a fool of himself before all the workmen and us."

"Who was this Haro? Was it Harold?" asked May.

"No, you old goose; Harold was a Saxon. Rollo was the first duke of Normandy, and Ha-Ro is a contraction of Ha! Rollo. The law was in force when the islands belonged to Normandy, and they still retain a great many of these old Norman laws. Poor old Major Johnson will have to do without a walled-in garden now."

"I am glad I have seen it, though it is a stupid old law. Would not Sydney have enjoyed it?"

"Yes, but neither he nor Grace deserve to be let out from their lessons even for a few minutes; they do behave abominably to that little tutor. What do you think they did the other morning? They put a crapeau in his hat, and when he took it up to put it on, this wretched animal fell out."

"I wonder Grace can be so unladylike; she is as bad as Sydney, if not worse," said May.

"Just as bad. She catches all the little crabs which Sydney slips into Voisin's pockets."

"Is that what they do with those crabs! I have often wondered. I thought they were making an aquarium."

"Not they; nothing so sensible. But if they go on in this way after Father returns, I'll tell him myself if Voisin does not, because it is too bad of them; it is insulting the man, besides waste of money, for they learn nothing. I fancy he means to have it out though, for he has asked me several times when we expect Mr. Kilgour," said Mervyn.

Mr. Kilgour arrived at the end of June, intending to stay for two months for his summer holidays. He seemed in very good spirits, but he did not enlighten any of his children as to how his money matters were progressing. About Kitty he was less reserved, and told them she was going on so satisfactorily that Dr. Sandys hoped to let her come to Jersey in October at the latest.

"Grace," said Mervyn one evening, when Mr. Kilgour had been home about a week, "have you and Sydney given up zoology since Father came home?"

"I don't know what you mean, we never learnt it," said Grace.

"Indeed! I thought all those crabs and crapeaus you and Syd used to collect so industriously were specimens brought home for you to study," said Mervyn.

"Be quiet, Mervyn, and don't be so disagreeable," said Grace in an undertone, fearing her father, who was in the room reading the paper, should overhear the conversation and ask for an

explanation; but if he did hear, Mr. Kilgour made no inquiries, though Mervyn went on teasing Grace the rest of the evening about her zoological mania and its sudden collapse, so strangely coincident, as he said, with his father's return. This saying things in his father's presence, which the others did not wish him to hear, was a favourite form of teasing of Mervyn's; but Mr. Kilgour never took any notice of it, though he knew perfectly what was going on, and on this particular occasion he guessed Grace had been doing some mischief which she did not wish to get to his ears, so he made no inquiries.

The next morning, however, he was destined to know, for Mr. Voisin requested a private interview, and then saying he did not like to speak till Mr. Kilgour had been home some little time, he gave him a detailed account of all he had undergone at the hands of his pupils, whose progress was far from satisfactory. The crabs, the crapeau, Grace's insolent manner, Sydney's impertinence and idleness, nothing was forgotten, and Mr. Kilgour received about as bad an account of the two pupils as it was possible for master to give.

"You two are in for it, and serve you both right, too," said Mervyn, going into the schoolroom to Grace and Sydney.

"What do you mean, Mervyn?" cried Grace.

"What I say. Voisin has been for the last half-hour alone in the dining-room with Father. He has just gone, and I heard Father say as he let him out, 'I will see that it does not occur again.' So evidently he has heard all about your goings

on, and I would not be in either of your shoes for five shillings."

"Well, get out of our school-room; you need not sit there exulting over us in that mean way," said Grace.

"I sha'n't do anything of the kind. I am a great deal too much interested in the matter. I am going to sit here and see what happens. Here comes Mr. Kilgour. Oh, no! you don't get out of the window, either of you; here you stay," said Mervyn, catching hold of Grace with one hand and Sydney with the other, just as the door opened and in walked Mr. Kilgour.

"Mervyn, leave the room, please. I want to speak to Grace and Sydney," said Mr. Kilgour, and Mervyn much against his inclination was forced to obey. "Mr. Voisin has just been with me, and has given me such a disgraceful account of your conduct I can scarcely believe it till I hear from your own lips it is true. Is it possible that you have both been guilty of such vulgar impertinence as to put crabs and toads in Mr. Voisin's pockets and hat?" continued Mr. Kilgour when Mervyn was gone.

Grace and Sydney, looking exceedingly foolish, answered "Yes" in a very low voice, and Mr. Kilgour went through all the charges, making them confess to each one separately till he had exhausted Mr. Voisin's complaints.

"I am disgusted with you both. You will have no holidays this summer, not even your usual Saturday. I have made arrangements with Mr. Voisin to come daily for the next six weeks, and this will prevent you from taking part in most

of the excursions we intend making, and which I was looking forward to enjoying with you. And when Mr. Voisin comes to-morrow morning you will both beg his pardon. You don't go out of doors to-day, and I don't wish to see either of you again till I hear from Mr. Voisin that you have apologized to him." So saying Mr. Kilgour departed.

This sentence affected the culprits in different ways. Sydney, who was an idle young monkey, was very much cut up at finding he was to have no holidays and no picnics, to both of which he had been looking forward; while Grace, though regretting the picnics, didn't so much mind no holidays, but loathed having to beg Mr. Voisin's pardon, which Sydney cared very little about.

"I sha'n't care for that much; besides, we have behaved like cads, I think," said Sydney; "but I do wish we were going to have some holidays."

"I don't care for that so much; but I won't apologize to that man. I declare I won't," said Grace.

"Yes, you must, Grace; pray, don't make it worse by refusing. We don't want to have another row with Father."

"You'll see I sha'n't," said Grace. "And where are we going to have our meals, I should like to know? Are we to starve all to-day and to-morrow? At least, as far as I am concerned, it will be starving altogether if we are not to eat till we have apologized to Mr. Voisin."

"We shall have to have our dinner in the kitchen, I suppose. I don't mind; do you?" said Sydney.

"Mind! I should think I did mind. I would

rather have none a great deal;" and Grace looked very unhappy.

"Look here, Grace! I'll go and tell Ellen we are in a scrape and ask her to let us have our dinner and tea and breakfast in here; shall I?" and not waiting for an answer, Sydney ran off, and talked Ellen into obliging them.

It was a lovely afternoon and evening which these two were doomed to spend in the house, while the others went for a drive, and even before bedtime arrived Sydney was in a penitent frame of mind and regretted his folly; but Grace was more angry than sorry, and inclined to be sulky, only there was no one but her companion in misfortune to sulk with.

The next morning, as soon as Mr. Voisin arrived, Sydney made the *amende honorable;* but Grace did nothing of the kind. She did her lessons much better than usual, indeed as well as possible; but she addressed no word to Mr. Voisin except to answer his questions. At one o'clock, just as the tutor was about to take his departure, Mr. Kilgour came in.

"Good morning, Mr. Voisin, I hope these naughty children have begged your pardon."

"Yes, sir, Master Sydney has. We are going to turn over a new leaf," said the tutor.

"There's a good boy, Sydney," said Mr. Kilgour, putting his arm round Sydney, who knew he was forgiven; and as his father's smile was like the sunshine to him, ran away happy in spite of his punishment.

"And have not you done the same, Grace?" said Mr. Kilgour, turning to Grace, who was

standing by the table in a great state of indignation at being called a naughty child by her father in Mr. Voisin's hearing.

"No," she answered in a low voice.

"Then do so at once," was the answer, so sharply spoken that Grace burst into tears.

"Did you hear me, Grace?" repeated Mr. Kilgour in the same tone, and Grace, really frightened, sobbed out: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Voisin."

Mr. Voisin muttered something quite unintelligible, felt as uncomfortable as Grace, and finally bowed himself out of the room, registering a vow never to complain to Mr. Kilgour again if they stuffed every crapeau in the island into his pockets.

"You can dine with us, Grace, as usual," said Mr. Kilgour as he left the room; but Grace did not appear again till tea time, having cried till her head ached so badly she was obliged to lie down, and she looked so woebegone when she did appear that even Mervyn refrained from teasing her.

The next day Mervyn had a letter which he was rather mysterious about, not choosing to say from whom it came, but seeming very much amused with the contents.

"May, will you walk to the pier with me to see the mail come in? She is just boxed, so if we go at once we shall be in time to see her. We can catch the train if you are sharp," said Mervyn on the following morning.

"Oh, Mervyn, would not Father go with you instead? It is so hot, and I feel so lazy," said May dreamily.

"No; I don't know where he is, and I don't want him to come to-day. I have had a letter from Brand, May, and I want to talk to you about it," replied Mervyn.

At this news May's laziness disappeared, and in a few minutes she and Mervyn were on their way to the little railway-station.

"What does he say? Show me the letter, Mervyn, will you? Do; there's a dear boy!" pleaded May.

"I will when we get home. I have not it with me. I don't wear Brand's letters next my heart as you do."

"I don't, for I have none to wear. How is he, Mervyn?"

"He is all right, and in very good spirits. He is ordered to India. They are to sail on the first."

"To India! Oh! what shall I do?" exclaimed May.

"Do! why, rejoice. Don't look as if you were going to faint. It is a splendid thing for him; he gets double pay, and he hopes to get a staff appointment very shortly and come back in two years for you. You will see just as much of him if he remained in England as you will when he is in India. The only drawback is he is going out at the worst time in the hot weather; but that can't be helped. Wait a minute; here is the train. Let us get an empty carriage."

"Oh, dear, what a world it is! Miserable place! I don't know whether to be glad or sorry," sighed May, as the man closed the carriage-door.

"I know which you'd be if you knew all I could tell you," said Mervyn to himself, adding

aloud: "He wants to come over here before he goes, May, and asks me if I think you could manage to see him."

"Does he really say that? Oh! what shall I do? There never was such a miserable woman as I am. I have promised Father not to speak or to write to Harry without his knowledge."

"Does Brand know that?" asked Mervyn.

"No; he only knows I am forbidden to. He does not know I have promised; and I am glad he does not, for he would not let me break my promise, and *I must*—see him I will, and there is no other way."

"Well, women have very elastic consciences on such matters. I suppose you mean to do it, and then tell Father when it is too late to stop you."

"Yes, I must. Of course it is very wrong of me; but I can't help it. I always was very wicked. Mervyn, you will tell Harry to come; won't you? and you won't mention my promise, and you'll help me to see him? Will you, Mervyn?" begged May.

"I will help you to see him if he comes. I won't promise more than that. Hulloa! the mail is flagged. We shall have to walk pretty quick. Jump out. I tell you what, May, we will take a fly. I'll stand treat; it is so hot to walk fast."

May was too much engrossed in thinking over all she had just heard to be surprised at this unwonted piece of extravagance of Mervyn's, and seated herself in the fly in a dream. Nor did she hear Mervyn tell the driver to wait when they got out at the end of the pier.

The Southampton boat was just coming into

the harbour, and Mervyn with a broad grin on his face led his sister to the edge of the pier to see her come through the mouth of the harbour. There were a great many passengers on board; but May was too much occupied with her own thoughts to pay much attention to any of them; nor did she notice that Mervyn was exchanging signs with some one on board.

Suddenly, while the boat was performing some mysterious evolutions in the harbour preparatory to getting into her berth, Mervyn, whose attention had been attracted by a figure on the Weymouth or Albert Pier, which is only separated from the Southampton or Victoria Pier by the mouth of the harbour, exclaimed: "Botheration! There is Father on the Weymouth Pier."

"Where?" said May. "Oh, yes; so there is; he has come down to see the mail in. We might get ferried across to him. I like that pier better than this, and it is shorter."

"We won't do anything of the kind. Just suppose Harry should happen by any chance to be on board this boat; we should miss him."

"But it is not the least likely. In fact, it is impossible," said May.

"I am not so sure about that. Just look at that gentleman standing close to the steamer's side and looking up at us. It is wonderfully like Brand."

"Oh, Mervyn! Mervyn! it is Harry. He sees us, too. Look! he is taking off his hat."

"It is a miserable world, May, isn't it?" said Mervyn, imitating May's tone a few minutes before.

"No, you silly boy. Mervyn, do you think that boat will ever come near enough for Harry to land? I should think they have been fooling about in that harbour for at least an hour."

"Say two hours at once, May. In reality they have been seven minutes, and don't fall into the harbour for the sake of being picked up by Brand. Just come round here and mix with these other people, then Father is not so likely to spot us. If he did, he would guess at once from your excitement that Brand was on board."

"I forgot my father. Do you think he has seen us, Mervyn? How I wish he would go home! If he were to see Harry it would put an end to our fun before it has begun."

"It would, indeed; so be careful, May. They will have to land by the steps, for the tide is rather low, so he won't be so likely to see Brand. The best plan will be, May, as soon as they begin to land, for you to get into the carriage. I'll wait for Harry and send him after you. The carriage is closed; I told the coachman to shut it up. You had better get in now: they'll begin to land directly, and Brand is sure to be the first on shore."

"Very well. Did you know he was coming to-day, Mervyn?" asked May, as they threaded their way through endless hampers and barrels of potatoes to the fly.

"Yes. Now get in, and in a few minutes I'll bring Harry."

May obeyed, and in a few minutes the door opened and Harry Brand sprang in.

"Have you any luggage besides that coat and

umbrella, Brand?" asked Mervyn, poking his head in at the window a few minutes later.

"Only a portmanteau and a hat-box, my dear fellow."

"All right, then; I'll go and look for them, while you two say how do you do to each other; you may have finished by the time I come back, if I don't hurry," said Mervyn; but the lovers were too much engrossed with each other to pay any attention to his sarcasm. Ten minutes later Mervyn appeared, followed by a porter with the luggage.

"How quick you have been, Mervyn, dear!" said May.

"Quick! why I could have done it in half the time if I had chosen. Pontac Hotel, driver, and put us down at Samarez Corner."

"What are we going to Pontac for?" asked May.

"Because it is nearer to you than Bree's. I can stay a week, and I want to see as much as I can of you in that time," explained Mr. Brand; "this Pontac is only about a mile from your house, is it?"

"It is only three quarters, I should say. Look here, May, lean back, for we are sure to pass Mr. Kilgour at the end of the pier. He will be on my side, so I'll turn my back to the window," said Mervyn.

"There he is," exclaimed Mr. Brand; "how I should like to bow to him! I mean to call on him the day before I leave to say good-bye, though I fear the trial of parting with me will be too much for him."

"Don't talk of going yet, Harry; you have only just come," said May.

"No, I won't; I mean to have no end of fun before I go. I told your father I would see you when I chose, so I can do it with a clear conscience."

May inwardly wished she could too, but she silenced hers by thinking she would confess it all when the week was over, both to her father and her lover; and she gave herself up to listening to Harry's plans of meeting for the next few days. To begin with, they were to spend the afternoon on the rocks at Pontac, Mervyn consenting to accompany them at a discreet distance; and then they would make some arrangements for the next day, and discuss whether or no they should take Sydney and Grace into their confidence.

At dinner Mr. Kilgour mentioned having been to the pier, though as he did not seem to have seen Mervyn or May they did not think it necessary to tell him they had been to the other pier; but May felt very hot and guilty, and was glad when the subject was changed. Unfortunately the next thing Mr. Kilgour did was to propose a drive for that afternoon, inviting Mervyn and May to accompany him and Mrs. Kilgour.

"I don't think I will go, Father, it is so hot," said May, intending to spend the afternoon on the rocks at Pontac, where it was much hotter.

"I have promised to meet a friend at Pontac, or I should have been delighted to go," said Mervyn.

"What is your friend's name?" inquired Mr. Kilgour.

"Douglas," said Mervyn, soothing his conscience with the recollection that Harry's second name was Douglas.

"Why didn't you go, May? I don't think Father liked it," said Grace, when Mr. Kilgour left the table.

"He might as well take you and Sydney," said May evasively. "Why don't you ask him?"

"I would not condescend to," said Grace.

"Would you come if he condescended to ask you?" said Mr. Kilgour, reappearing in time to overhear Grace's remark.

"Yes," said Grace, blushing and leaning over the back of her chair. Mr. Kilgour took hold of her face and lifted it up till his lips touched her forehead.

"Then go and get ready, and tell Sydney he may come too. We will go to the Corbières," said Mr. Kilgour; and Grace ran away very happy, for this was almost the first time her father had spoken to her since the scene with Mr. Voisin two days ago.

So in very different ways the whole family passed a very happy afternoon; Mervyn and his turtle-doves, as he called them, planning a shrimping party for the next day, and deciding to take the children, as they called Grace and Sydney, into their secret. This was the more necessary, as they would have to borrow some shrimping-nets of Mr. Falle, and Mervyn would not ask for them; so Sydney was deputed to do so, and to learn from him the best place to go to.

At last the party was completely arranged: the four Kilgours were to start for Le Hocq soon

after their early dinner. It was not mentioned that there Harry Brand would meet them, and Grace and Sydney were to be bound to secrecy; but it was understood they would wade out as far as possible with the ebbing tide and shrimp till the tide turned, when they were to be sure and hasten back to a large rock on the shore, where they were to make a fire, boil the shrimps and have tea.

All this was settled to the satisfaction of everybody, when to May's dismay Mr. Kilgour asked permission to join them at tea time and help to eat the shrimps. At any other time this would have been considered a great honour by them, as it now was by Grace and Sydney; but May knew it would spoil her pleasure, as Harry could not be there if her father were, besides she could not bear the constant fear of discovery, and the conciousness that she was acting dishonourably in breaking her promise and deceiving her father; but nothing could be done except acquiesce in the plan as amiably as possible.

Fortunately it was not a very hot day, and there was a delicious breeze, but even then they found the walk to Le Hocq, carrying the heavy nets and baskets, very hot and tiring. The astonishment of Grace and Sydney on meeting Harry Brand was great, but they readily agreed to keep the secret, and knowing nothing of May's promise to her father, thought it great fun. When they reached the sea the gentlemen took off their shoes and socks and rolled their trousers up to their knees, while Grace and May put on some old shoes and pinned up their dresses, intending to wade knee-deep, regardless of getting wet. The party

soon separated, the lovers going off together with one net between them, which it was observed by the others always took a very long time to empty, and required four hands during the process; Grace stuck to the pools and caught more shrimps than any of the others, while Mervyn went out as far as he could wade, and Sydney followed as close as he dared. For two or three hours they all fished most industriously and had very good sport, and came to the conclusion that shrimping, if a very tiring, back-breaking amusement, was nevertheless very good fun.

At last Mervyn, whose basket was full, turned back, and pointing to a cart which was being filled with sand as a rendezvous, shouted to the others to join him there.

"I am so dreadfully tired I can never walk back," said Grace.

"So am I," said May; "and so wet."

"Look here! why not drive on the top of that sand-cart? it is perfectly clean, and no one will see you. We will get the man to drive you to the beach. I'll go and drive a bargain," said Mr. Brand.

The man was delighted to oblige them, so Harry Brand lifted May and Mervyn Grace on to the top of the tumbril which was filled with sand, while Sydney clambered up after them.

"Are you all right? It will jolt you frightfully, but hold on," said Mr. Brand; and then amidst shouts of laughter the man whipped his horses and led them slowly on, Mervyn and Brand following.

"I am falling," laughed May; "hold me, Sydney."

"Dig your hands down into the sand as I do, May," said Grace; and by degrees they grew accustomed to their novel position and held on.

"It is a new sensation, there is something in that," said May in the *blasé* tone which she affected occasionally.

They had gone about half a mile and were still nearly a mile from the rock they wished to reach when Grace exclaimed:

"Here is Father coming to meet us."

"Harry, what shall we do? Here is Father," cried May.

"By Jove, so there is. Whew! I can't go back or I shall be drowned, that is very clear, and I can't go on or there is an end of all our fun. If I cut across towards Pontac he will see me and suspect something, if he does not recognise me. Here, stop, my man. We need not accelerate matters. If I were to hide in the sand I might be suffocated: I have it! Driver, change coats with me; put on mine and leave it at Pontac Hotel, and lend me your blouse and whip; you can call for them and the cart in about an hour's time: and now take this net and basket and carry to that rock over there, and walk close to that gentleman you see coming towards us. Do you understand?" and Mr. Brand put some silver into the man's hand which helped his understanding, and then amid much laughter took the whip and arrayed in the blouse, which hid all his costume and reached to his knees, he walked barefoot to the horses' heads and proceeded to lead them.

"I am a Jerseyman and can't understand a word of English, mind that, May," said Harry, turning



THE DISGUISE.

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the Zulu hat he had bought for the shrimping down so that it hid all the upper part of his face.

On they went again, speculating as to whether or no Mr. Kilgour would recognise their driver, while the real driver walked boldly past him unchallenged, Mr. Kilgour merely thinking he was an amateur fisherman who had wisely put on old boots and corduroy trousers.

At last the cart reached Mr. Kilgour, who seemed highly amused at the position of his daughters, more particularly of Grace, whose horror at such a proceeding a few months ago would have been great.

"We were so tired we could not walk," explained May, inwardly trembling as Mr. Kilgour stopped close to Harry, who touched his hat without looking up.

"So we asked this Jerseyman to give us a lift," said Mervyn.

"Very good of him," replied Mr. Kilgour. "You don't often drive young ladies, I suppose?" turning to the man.

"He does not understand English, Father. Avancez, vîte, s'il vous plaît," said May, while Mervyn called out to his father to come and look at his shrimps, and managed to keep him behind the cart for the rest of the way, which seemed to May interminable, and her heart was beating so loud with fear lest Harry should be discovered she fancied every one must hear it.

At last they reached the rock, and May heard her father discuss with Mervyn how much they should give the carter for his trouble, and sunk, not into her shoes but into the sand with fright,

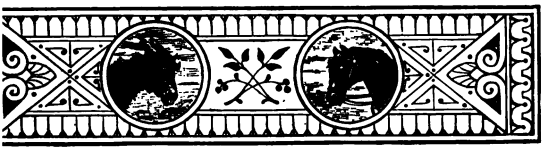
when she heard Mr. Kilgour suggest asking him himself.

"Let Mervyn give him half-a-crown, Father," said May, "or let me. I can ask him in French if he is satisfied;" and Mr. Kilgour, apparently nothing suspecting, agreed.

Mr. Brand dare not come forward to help May down, much as he longed to do so, but had to stand by his horses while Mervyn lifted her off the cart, and then May went forward and as she gave the half-crown whispered:

"I'll signal to you as soon as he goes. Come when I wave a white handkerchief."

"Bien entendu, et merci bien, chérie," was the reply; and then jumping on to the shaft Mr. Brand drove off in the correct style of his assumed character, while May, much relieved at his escape, told her father the man seemed quite satisfied.



CHAPTER VIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

WHETHER purposely or not, Mervyn and Grace took so long lighting the fire, and when lighted, the fire took so long boiling the kettle, that Mr. gour, despairing of ever getting any tea, and vinced they would never boil the shrimps over t fire, suggested he should take home a basket- and get Ellen to cook them for himself and ɜ. Kilgour, which proposal was received by y with inward rejoicing; and no sooner was ɔut of sight than she tied a handkerchief to of the nets, and climbing on to a high piece rock, signalled wildly to her lover, who was slow in returning the signal from the hotel ɔony, where, having changed his clothes, he ɜ eagerly watching and hoping to be sum- ned.

We have not begun yet, the shrimps are rly ready, and then we have to boil the kettle tea; so you are in plenty of time, Harry," l Grace, as Mr. Brand arrived with May, who, pite of her fatigue, had gone to meet him.

"Be quick, then, for I am so hungry. Was not it fun, Mervyn? I thought your father had spotted me when he first came up; I quaked not for myself but for May. Now I wonder what he would have done if he had recognised me?"

"Pretended he didn't, as likely as not. In fact I am not at all sure that he didn't know you, he looked very hard at you for a moment; I thought it was all up with us till I got him behind the cart. Suppose he saw you land yesterday; it would be rather a sell for us, wouldn't it, if it should turn out he is taking us in all the while?" said Mervyn.

"My dear Mervyn, don't trouble yourself to try and alarm me, or I'll pitch you into the sea. Mr. Kilgour is as blissfully ignorant of my presence here as I unhappily am of Hindostanee," said Mr. Brand, helping May to some shrimps. "And now let us settle what we are to do to-morrow. In the morning, Mervyn, you and I will bathe in the Pontac-tub, you understand? then, May, you meet me on the beach about half-past eleven and we will while away the morning on the rocks and plan the afternoon; then the next day you and I and Mervyn will drive to Plemont in a dog-cart; you will have to get leave somehow, if not you must come without leave, that is all; as well for a sheep as a lamb when we are about it. Oh! May, your father's face when I call on him next Tuesday and confess to all this!"

"Don't, Harry, please. I am sure I shall never live through it; what with losing you, and my father's anger, I don't know what will become of me," said May

"Never mind, May, these days are worth a little suffering; besides, it will only be wholesome retribution after all," said Harry.

The Pontac-tub which he alluded to was in reality a boat belonging to the hotel from which he and Mervyn intended to bathe; but knowing May would be frightened at the idea of their jumping from a boat, he did not wish to rouse her fears by speaking more plainly. About ten the next day Mervyn walked to Pontac and he and Brand started on their expedition. Rowing lazily out to sea, when they were about half a mile out Brand undressed and dived in, reappearing the other side of the boat.

"Now, old fellow, paddle about while I have my swim, and then I'll take your place while you have a turn," said Brand, swimming about like a duck.

Mervyn agreed, but presently he grew tired of waiting for Brand, who seemed in no hurry to return; moreover, it was very hot, and the sea looked so tempting that Mervyn could resist no longer, and feeling certain they could easily return to the boat when they wanted to, he undressed and jumping in swam after Brand.

"Holloa!" said Brand, "where is the boat?"

"Oh! she is all right over there. I thought you were going to spend the morning swimming, so as I was hot I jumped in too," said Mervyn.

"You young scamp, it is ten to one if we get hold of the boat again, she is drifting away and I am not as fresh as I was; however, let us try for her;" and Brand swam in the direction of the boat, followed by Mervyn, to whom nothing seemed easier than to regain it.

Unfortunately, he soon found it was by no means so easy as he had imagined, and finding he could not keep up with Brand, he shouted:

"Go on, old fellow, and come back for me, I can't keep up with you."

Brand gave a look at the boat and another at Mervyn, whom he saw was getting tired, and fearing the boy's strength should fail, redoubled his own efforts to reach the boat, which he was gaining on but was still some distance off.

Mervyn grew very tired and tried swimming on his back and then on his side, and at last was obliged to give up swimming and floated. But the tide was strong and was carrying him out to sea; and still Brand was struggling after the boat, and seemed as if he would never reach it. Mervyn made another effort or two, but found he was too exhausted to swim a stroke, and gave himself up for lost, knowing he could never keep up till Brand rejoined him, even if he caught the boat immediately. Life had never seemed so sweet before as now under this summer sky, when he was sinking in this bright blue sea, so clear that he could see sea-weeds floating far beneath him, sinking to rise three times as he had heard bodies always did, and then, unless Brand was in time to pick up his dead body, sinking to be the food of the crabs, which would fasten on his eyes and face. All the horrors of drowning, all the terrors of death, all his past life, all the evil he had said and thought and done, passed through his mind in one brief minute, and then he fell asleep.

At a quarter past eleven May started to the

beach to meet her lover; she sauntered slowly along the Samarez-lane courting the shade, for the sun was scorching, and nothing in the world but Harry Brand would have tempted her out in such heat; when just as she reached the end of the lane she met Sydney running and looking very hot.

"Sydney, out at this time! where is Mr. Voisin?"

"Oh! I was going to bathe with Father. But, May, there are some fellows drowning, and Father is gone out in a boat to try and save them; I am going home for some rugs and brandy."

"Sydney, oh! if it should be Harry and Mervyn! I must go to the hotel and see; be quick back with the brandy, I'll get help from the hotel," said May. "Don't tell Mother," she cried out after Sydney; and then, regardless of the heat, May flew along the sands towards Pontac. As she went she saw a man in a boat whom she recognized as her father, pulling towards some figure that seemed to be struggling in the water; only one figure, thought May; oh! which is it, brother or lover? Mervyn or Harry? She dare not wish for either at the expense of the other. But, stay! further out at sea is another boat, and a round ball, which perhaps was a head, seemed moving towards it, gaining on it; would it reach it? Breathless and ready to drop down on the sands with fatigue and fear, May paused in an agony of suspense to watch; no! yes! no! yes! thank God! Something white flashed for a moment at the side of the boat, and then May burst into tears; one at least was saved, but which?

She could not stop to think; she turned to see if the other was still above water. Yes; surely her father had ceased rowing, he was leaning over the boat's side holding something; was it Mervyn or Harry? could he save whichever it was even now? would the boat capsize and two lives be lost instead of one? May covered her face in her hands for a moment, not daring to look; then she ran on a few steps, and then feeling she must know the worst or faint she turned again; yes, the other was safe, her father in his shirt sleeves seemed to be rubbing the body he had wrapped in his own coat to reproduce respiration.

May paused no more till she reached Pontac hotel.

"Did two gentlemen go out bathing from here in a boat?"

"Yes, Mr. Brand and a young gentleman."

"They are nearly drowned; one is in a boat out there, my father has picked up the other a little nearer the shore; can you help us?"

"Yes, Miss, I'll go out myself to the gentleman that is alone; I guess it is Mr. Brand, because it is our boat. I'll take some brandy and some blankets with me, and I'll send my cart down to meet the other boat. Perhaps the gentleman won't be able to walk," said the hotel-keeper, and in another minute or two he had put out to help Harry Brand, who had reached the boat just in time, for he was getting dreadfully exhausted.

He saw Mr. Kilgour was near Mervyn, and for a few minutes he lay resting at the bottom of the boat till he was sufficiently recovered to dress. By degrees he grew stronger, and then feeling

very cold he struggled into some of his clothes, but the effort was almost too much for him, and he was obliged to rest again.

"Lucky young monkey that Mervyn is. He has some one to row him to shore, while I am very likely to be carried out goodness knows where before I have enough strength to row home. I have his clothes in my boat, so I score there," said Mr. Brand to himself.

"I wonder if old Kilgour recognized me, or if that silly young Mervyn will be so frightened that he will let the cat out of the bag," was Mr. Brand's next thought, when looking round he saw a boat coming towards him from the hotel.

"We have had a squeak for it. Did you bring any brandy, Jones?" was Harry's salutation.

"Yes, sir; are you all right?"

"I shall be when I have had a pull at that flask; but I would rather you rowed me back, as you have come after me."

"The young lady was in a terrible fright, sir, when she heard it was you. She sent me," explained Mr. Jones.

No need for Mr. Brand to inquire who the young lady was, and having had some brandy he professed himself quite well and watched the proceedings of the other boat while the hotel-keeper rowed him ashore. The other boat reached the shore near Samarez before they arrived at Pontac, and then they saw Mervyn lifted in some rugs into the cart, and off drove the party.

"I suppose they wrapped him up because I have his clothes," said Harry, wondering how he should see May now, for she had gone home in

the cart, and it never occurred to him to be anxious about Mervyn when once he was picked up.

It had fortunately happened that Mr. Kilgour and Sydney had gone down to the beach to bathe, but before they undressed their attention had been attracted by two men bathing from a boat which it soon appeared was drifting away from them. Mr. Kilgour, seeing they were in danger, had sent Sydney home and had jumped into the first boat he could find and rowed after them. To his horror he found the one in most danger, and who seemed to be sinking, was his own son Mervyn, whom he reached just as Mervyn lost consciousness, and it was with the greatest difficulty he succeeded in getting him into the boat; then he wrapped him in his coat and rubbed him with the hope of restoring him, but though Mr. Kilgour fancied he could detect a faint breathing Mervyn was quite unconscious, and his father in great anxiety rowed him to shore as quickly as possible. There Sydney had arrived with some railway-rugs and brandy, and, wrapping Mervyn in them, Mr. Kilgour lifted him on to the sands and poured some brandy down his throat.

In a few moments Mervyn opened his eyes and seeing his father kneeling over him asked where he was.

"You are all right; I picked you up. The question now is how I am to get you home."

"My clothes are in the boat," said Mervyn.

"Yes; and your friend has rowed off with them; he saw you were safe, I suppose."

"I think he was done up, because Jones is gone out after him," said Sydney; "here comes May."

"Which is it? I mean who is it?" asked May breathlessly.

"Mervyn, he is getting better; if I could only get him home! I shall have to carry you, my boy," said Mr. Kilgour.

"No; here comes a dog-cart. I went to the hotel for help," said May, just as the dog-cart came up.

Mervyn was then lifted in, and then, much against May's inclination, Mr. Kilgour insisted on her following him and driving slowly home while he and Sydney followed. Of course she was obliged to obey, and her anxiety about Harry was laid at rest by seeing two figures sitting up in the boat the hotel-keeper was rowing to shore. Mervyn was put to bed as soon as he reached home, though he declared he would not remain there a moment after the first bell for their early dinner rang; but falling asleep he did not wake till his mother stood before him with his dinner on a tray, and though he felt quite well he was obliged to eat it in bed, after which he got up and dressed and went to look for May, to propose they should go and look up Harry Brand.

May met him on the stairs in a great state of indignation.

"It is so tiresome, Father has just sent for me to go and see some stupid old clergyman that is calling; old worry, what did he want to come today for, I wonder? Do wait for me, Mervyn, I won't be a minute longer than I can help."

"Trust you for that when Brand is in the case," said Mervyn.

"Mervyn, did Father ask who it was bathing with you? Do you think he saw Harry?"

"No, he didn't ask; but I tell you May, and I am not joking, I believe he suspects; and if you have not told Brand you are breaking your promise, you ought to do so, for I don't think we ought to go on with this game much longer."

"Well, Mervyn, I'll tell Harry to-morrow at Plemont, I will indeed, I promise, though I suppose you will say my promises are not worth much. I must fly now to this Mr. What-is-his-name," said May as she hastened down-stairs.

The visitor turned out to be a Mr. Carteret, the rector of Gorey, a village two or three miles off Samarez; he was an old gentleman apparently about seventy, with white hair and a long white beard, he had a decided stoop, and was dressed in a suit of broadcloth, with tight cloth gaiters and a very clerical hat. "He looks more like a dean or a bishop than a rector of a country parish," thought May as her father introduced her to Mr. Carteret, who much to her disgust gave her a very long and affectionate shake of the hand. He seemed much interested in gardening, and held forth largely on the way he managed his cuttings, when he took them, how many he saved last year, where he kept them; and having exhausted an account of his own geraniums, he began telling Mr. Kilgour a long story of how one of his neighbours managed his.

"Prosy old thing, I do wish he would go; how long am I to be kept here, I wonder? and what do I care how many cuttings he takes if he would only take himself off?" thought May.

Presently Mr. Kilgour appeared to have had enough of cuttings, so at the next opportunity

he changed the topic by giving his visitor an account of his son's accident that morning; a subject that interested May more, but brought the tell-tale blood to her cheeks, and made her feel so uncomfortable that she was disposed to strike in with an inquiry as to whether Mr. Carteret had a geranium called the "Jersey Wonder," when her confusion was still more increased by a question of her father's.

"By the way, May," he said, suddenly breaking off in his story and turning to May, "did you hear Mervyn say who his friend was that was bathing with him, and who rowed off with his clothes?"

"Mr. Douglas, I think, papa," stammered May, and then, much to her relief, Mr. Carteret, whose mind seemed incapable of wandering far from his stock subject, suggested taking a turn in the garden.

"Now," thought May, "perhaps I shall be able to escape; surely he can't want me to show him the garden as well as Father;" but no such luck for her. Seeing May did not seem about to accompany them, Mr. Carteret, bowing very low, begged in very courteous terms that she would do him the honour of coming as well, adding he was sure he should miss the fairest flower unless she was in the garden.

"Silly old man," thought May, "with his compliments! how I wish he would go and set me free to go to Harry! I am wasting the afternoon."

But Mr. Carteret seemed most unwilling to depart. He poked round and round the garden, grubbing with his gold-headed cane at almost

every flower, and May fancied once or twice trying to get rid of Mr. Kilgour, by asking for a cutting of this and seeds of that plant; but her father seemed to have no intention of leaving her to entertain his guest, however bored he was himself; so he sent May to the greenhouse for the seeds, and at last Mr. Carteret took his departure, when he left handing May a rose he had been toying with for some minutes, and hoping she would condescend to wear it for his sake.

"That old gentleman seemed a little smitten, May," said her father, when at last Mr. Carteret had taken his seat in his victoria.

"Old goose, I thought he would never go! Why did you send for me, Father?"

"I thought you would like to see him, and I felt sure he would like to see you," replied Mr. Kilgour, somewhat pointedly, May thought; but she was too anxious to join Mervyn to stay any longer or to take any notice of it. As she ran upstairs she dropped the rose, and on picking it up a small piece of paper that was wound round the stem came off, and to May's astonishment she found it was written on; she opened it and could scarcely repress a scream when she saw in Harry Brand's handwriting the words: "Meet me at the corner by the sands as soon as possible. Harry."

What could it mean? Was Mr. Carteret a friend of Harry's? Had he undertaken to convey a message from him to her and to deliver it under her father's very nose? Why had Harry never told her he knew this Mr. Carteret? It was a mystery, and one May could not solve;

Mervyn too, whose patience had been all but exhausted, could no more understand it than May did when she told him.

"Well, we shall soon know, for here we are at the corner; but I don't see Brand anywhere, May," said Mervyn looking round.

"Nor I; and oh! Mervyn, there is Mr. Carteret coming towards us; what shall we do? Let us pretend not to see him, and go down to the sea till he has passed."

"We can't, he is calling us to stop," said Mervyn

"What a very odd thing! Where is his carriage? He left in a victoria. What can he want with us, and oh! where is Harry?"

"Perhaps he knows," said Mervyn as Mr. Carteret came up, and taking off his hat made a very low bow to Mervyn, while May muttered:

"Mr. Carteret, my eldest brother; Mervyn, this is Mr. Carteret."

"Oh, is it?" said Mervyn, to May's horror rudely giving Mr. Carteret a cut across the shoulders from his cane before he had recovered from his bow; and then to her surprise they both went into shouts of laughter.

"Why, May, didn't you know me?" said the voice of Harry Brand from out the gray beard.

"I knew you directly," said Mervyn when he could speak.

"Harry! oh! how could you do such a thing? How did you dare to do it?" said May, and then she joined in the laughter.

"Well, I could not keep away any longer, to tell you the truth; besides, I was anxious to know how Mervyn was, for as you did not come to the

beach all the morning I was afraid he was ill, so this idea struck me and I carried it out," said Mr. Brand.

"But where did you get your dress from?"

"I had it for some theatricals, and I brought it over here meaning to show you what a fine respectable parson I should make when I have sown all my wild oats," said Harry.

"You would be a Brand plucked from the burning indeed, if ever May worked you up to that pitch," said Mervyn.

"And your carriage, I thought the man was in livery!" said May.

"Oh, no! I hired that from some stables here, and told them to turn me out as nice a trap and driver as they could."

"But Father! oh! Harry, how could you?" said May.

"Wasn't it grand to see your father so polite while I bored him about those old geraniums? It was a grand sight, Mervyn; I did not think I should have succeeded so well," said Harry.

"If you have taken my father in I will eat that hat of yours, tassels and all. I would lay any odds he recognised you," said Mervyn.

Neither May nor Harry, however, would believe this for one moment; and Mr. Brand, having driven to Pontac to change his costume while they slowly sauntered after him, they afterwards spent the afternoon on the rocks planning their expedition to Plemont for the next day.



CHAPTER IX.

A DAY AT PLEMONT.

THE plan they arranged was that Mervyn and May should obtain permission to drive to Plemont for the day, that a dog-cart should be ordered to take them, that Mervyn should drive May as far as the town, where Harry would join them. The great difficulty to be overcome was the opposition that Mr. and Mrs. Kilgour might raise to the plan, in which case they decided to take French leave, and go without their consent. If it came to this, and May fervently hoped it would not, for she had never deliberately disobeyed her father in her life, Mervyn was to let Harry know, and then he would meet them in the dog-cart at their favourite trysting-place, the bottom of the lane. All the way home from the beach Mervyn and May argued and discussed how they should ask permission and who should ask it; at last it was decided May was to attack her mother as soon as they reached home, and win her consent, while Mervyn agreed to ask his father at tea.

"I'll do it before the others, then it won't look

so pointed; and don't you get as red as a peony, May," said Mervyn.

"I can't help it, Mervyn, I do feel so horribly guilty."

"So you ought; why do you go on with it then?"

"It is only for one more day, Mervyn; I am going to tell Harry to-morrow about that promise, for I really could not go on with it any longer; besides, I am sure when he knows about that he will tell Father himself," said May.

Inwardly May was dreading having to tell Harry of her broken promise, for she was not sure how he would take it, knowing how sorry and disappointed he, as well as her father, would be to find she had been so dishonourable.

Mrs. Kilgour was easily persuaded to consent to the expedition, only stipulating that they should be careful about the tide, and not attempt to explore caves hitherto unentered by human feet; but on May's assuring her that there was a regular road down to the caves, and that they were visited by hundreds of visitors every year, and that beyond being overtaken by the tide no danger whatever was run in exploring them, Mrs. Kilgour waived all objections.

"Well, May, so I hear you made a conquest this afternoon of Mr. Carteret," said Grace at tea.

"Ah! there is no fool like an old fool," said May.

"Except a young one," put in Mervyn.

"Did you meet your friend in your walk, May?" asked Mr. Kilgour.

"Yes," said May looking very confused.

"Never mind, May, don't you be laughed at about Mr. Carteret: he is very well off, and a bachelor," said Mervyn coming to the rescue, for he feared May would betray herself in a few moments.

"I must return his visit to-morrow," remarked Mr. Kilgour.

"Is it usual to return first visits so promptly?" asked Mrs. Kilgour.

"In exceptional cases such as this, when an old gentleman of Mr. Carteret's age honours me with a visit, I think it is," said Mr. Kilgour.

"Father," interrupted Mervyn, who felt morally certain his father had recognised Harry Brand, "May and I want to go to Plemont to-morrow; have you any objection?"

"How do you propose going?" demanded Mr. Kilgour.

"In a dog-cart," said Mervyn.

"Why, you can't drive, Mervyn," objected Grace.

"My dear Grace, if I don't object to trusting my neck to Mervyn, why need you?" asked May.

"Why not get Mr. Carteret to drive you both?" said Mr. Kilgour.

"I wish Mr. Carteret had never come near the house," said May looking and feeling very much vexed.

"May we go, Father? It is all nonsense of Grace's, I can drive. She would not object if she were asked," said Mervyn.

"Yes, you may go if you like, but take care not to run into any danger or get into any scrapes," said Mr. Kilgour; and May was too

much delighted at his permission to suspect or criticise the way in which it was given.

After tea Mervyn met Brand in town and told him of their success, and then they ordered a dog-cart for the next day, with a quiet horse, for fear Mervyn should upset the trap before Harry joined them.

"My dear," said Mr. Kilgour to his wife just as May and Mervyn were starting on the following morning, "have you seen Mr. Carteret's card? I want his address, I am going to return his visit;" and with these ominous words ringing in their ears they drove off.

Harry Brand met them at the entrance to the town, and was a little disturbed at hearing of Mr. Kilgour's intention of returning his visit so promptly.

"The only comfort is, it shows he did not recognise you, Harry," said May.

"May, how blind you are! I am positive from father's manner last night at tea that he recognised Harry, and he knows he is going with us to-day," said Mervyn.

Mervyn would have been still more positive if he could have seen how Mr. Kilgour occupied his morning after they had left. He first walked to Pontac, ascertained that Mr. Brand was staying at the hotel there and left a card for him, then he took the train to St. Heliers, and going to some livery stables ordered a carriage and pair, and drove home. Arrived at La Chasse, he dismissed Mr. Voisin an hour before his usual time, saying he wished to give Grace and Sydney a holiday, having first ascertained that they had been

having as well as could be desired since Mr. Voisin had occasion to complain of them. Then Mr. Kilgour announced to his wife that he intended to go to Plemont and surprise Mervyn and May; and accordingly, about two hours later than the others, this second party started from La Chasse for Plemont.

Mr. Brand was a very good whip, and the horse, knowing the reins were in the hands of a good driver, took them along at a capital pace. It was a pretty drive, and in their enjoyment they soon forgot all about Mr Kilgour; first their road skirted St. Aubin's Bay, which bay Jerseymen are wont to call a miniature Bay of Naples; then it lay through one of the valleys which run across the island from north to south, valleys of luxuriant pasturage, with beautiful Jersey cows tethered in the meadows; a tiny brook ran through St. Peter's Valley, which the lovers and Mervyn were now traversing, which sometimes lost itself entirely or developed for a field or two into a reedy piece of marsh-land, with yellow irises in full bloom, then to reappear as a narrow stream. Then they climbed a hill and drove past several manor-houses; then through the Vinchelez lanes, where the trees meet overhead, their branches interlacing and forming a series of natural arches like the aisle of a cathedral; and then a little further on they saw a house standing alone on the top of a cliff, with Plemont Hotel painted in large letters across it.

"Here we are," exclaimed Harry. "Now I propose we go down to these caves and take our luncheon down with us and eat it there."

"There is only one objection to the plan; we have no luncheon to take," said Mervyn.

"Oh, have not we? Dive under that seat and you'll find a basket. If we don't find more than we want in there, Mr. Jones will know my opinion of him when we get back. We may as well go into the hotel for a minute to ask the way to the caves."

"And inquire about the tide, Harry, will you because I promised mother to be careful," said May.

"It is all right. This is the way down this cliff the tide is out, we can stay two hours, so we shall have plenty of time to see the caves and lunch," reported Harry when he came out of the hotel.

They now had rather a steep walk down the cliff. Mervyn carried the basket, and Harry helped May. Then they came to a little house where they had to pay a penny each to a dear woman, and then they crossed a rustic bridge built across a chasm between the cliff and a huge mass of rocks, down which they then climbed on to the sands.

The blue sea was a long way out, but it was rather rough, and long white waves kept breaking on the golden sands all round the bay; it seemed hard to believe the sea ever came up so high as where they now stood, and still harder when going round the rock they had just clambered down, they came upon a cave called the Needle Rock Cave, from a huge pointed piece of red granite that stands like a church steeple at the mouth of the cave.

They hid their basket and then explored the

caves, the sides of which were in places covered with limpets and red sea-anemones; higher up in the crevices of the rock, sometimes almost covering the vault of the cave, were bright green patches of the fern *Asplenium marinum;* on the ground lay huge boulders, and over these they had to climb to get into the caverns, some of which were quite dark at the further end. From the Needle Rock Cave is a natural doorway into another cavern called the Waterfall Cave, because a bright sparkling stream drips down the sides, splashing the ferns it passes and glittering like diamonds in the sunlight.

On the other side of the bay were more caves, and an hour soon slipped unnoticed away in exploring them, and then worn-out they found a shady place on some boulders, where they had a full view of the sea and so could not be cut off unawares by the tide, they spread out the contents of their basket, and as May said, ate about twice as much as they would have done at home under ordinary circumstances. Now all this time May had had no opportunity of speaking alone to Harry and making her confession, for Mervyn had been with them all day, so after they had finished lunch she was delighted to hear him propose going for a walk and meeting them at the hotel at three o'clock.

"It is now about a quarter to two, so you will have a good hour to talk in. I shall try and go up by that cliff over there—I see a path—instead of the way we came by the bridge, but I don't advise you to attempt it with May, Brand. Here, give me the basket or we shall never see it

again, and good-bye;" and with this Mervyn left them.

"Let us have another look at the Needle Rock Cave before we go, May, and then we will sit down on that big rock by the bridge, and watch the tide come in till it is time to join Mervyn," suggested Harry.

May agreed and decided to tell him in the cave about her promise, it would be easier there than out in the sunshine: and so seating herself on a boulder about half-way down the cave, May said she wanted to tell Harry something. The something was of course her broken promise, and the result was a lover's quarrel. Harry was angry and May wept, and then they sat silent, feeling very miserable, and quite oblivious of everything else. Presently Harry started up.

"Come along, May, I forgot the tide; we shall be cut off," said Harry.

"I don't care if we are," said May in a despairing tone.

"I do though," said Harry moving quickly, while May followed slowly; then May heard him exclaim something under his breath, saw him run hastily round a rock, and then with a face as white as a sheet he came back to her.

"May, my darling, we are surrounded!"

At first May did not take it in. Harry was no longer angry with her, life was sweet again, what did anything else matter? But when on emerging from the cave she saw the sea had come up all round, and had entirely cut off their path to the rock, their only way of escape, she understood what he meant.

"Harry!" cried May, clinging to his arm, "what are we to do? Shall we go back and wait in the cave?"

"No; the sea comes quite to the end, and if it didn't we should be suffocated, as it entirely blocks the entrance."

"Then what can we do? If we stay here the sea will drive us into the cave, and very soon too. Oh! if we could only reach the big rock. Is the sea very deep between us and it, Harry?"

"Yes; it is impossible unless we swam it."

"Harry," said May after a pause, while Harry seemed lost in thought, "leave me here, you can swim, you can't save me if you stay, why should both of us be lost when you can be saved?"

"Yes," said Harry, "a pretty ending that would be. No, May, I will save you or die in the attempt. You see that rock just beyond the Needle Rock? I am going to carry you to that. I shall have to wade, perhaps, up to my arm-pits, I may even have to swim, but I believe I can do it; will you trust yourself to me? There will be no great danger if you will do just what I tell you. Don't cling to me in your own way if you get frightened, or we may both be drowned, but trust to me;" and not waiting for May's answer he took her in his arms and walked into the sea towards the rock he had pointed out.

"If we reach that rock we can stay there for an hour or more, and we may be seen by the bridgekeeper," said Harry as he waded on, now knee-deep in the sea; each step, of course, the sea came higher up, and every wave arrested his progress.

"We shall do it; hold on now, May," said Harry as he lifted May on to his shoulder to keep her as dry as possible, and struggled bravely on to the rock.

"Catch hold of the rock," cried Harry a minute later, as a huge wave threatening to knock him down came rolling in, just as they reached their one hope. May obeyed, and managed to clamber on to the top of it, while Harry, who was wet through up to his chest, followed her, dripping like a drowned rat. May had come better off, she was only wet to her knees, but neither of them paid much attention to their wet clothes; the hour's respite and the hope of rescue was too sweet.

"Now we must shout and trust that that deaf old woman or some one will hear us," said Harry, shouting.

"If they do, what then, Harry? They could not get a boat to us, could they?"

"No; but with ropes they might haul us up on to the big rock, the passage between us and that is not more than ten feet wide," said Harry, shouting continually at intervals.

"Could you swim it?"

"I am not certain; the tide is so strong that the waves might dash me against the rock, besides I doubt if I could scale it without a rope. I will try if you think you have the courage to hold on here till some one comes, even if I am drowned before your eyes," said Harry. "I might succeed, and then I could return with ropes for you. Shall I go?"

"Not yet; at the last, when all hope is gone,

save yourself so if you can, but don't leave me yet," said May.

"I will go for your sake or not at all," said Harry decidedly. "It is nearly three, May; perhaps if Mervyn finds we are not at the hotel to meet him he may come to look for us: there is a chance, so cheer up!"

"I would not mind so much if I had not been so wicked, Harry; but how dreadful it will be for father if I die deceiving him! He will never be able to think of me except as his dishonourable and deceitful daughter."

"Don't, May. I am as much to blame as you; more, for leading you into this. Don't cry so, May; be hopeful, they are sure to hear us, or Mervyn will look for us. We can never be left to die here on this rock in the broad daylight; I can't believe it," said Harry, persuading himself there was no great danger for May's sake, but unable to conceal from himself the fact that the tide was rapidly rising, and that in less than another hour the rock they were on would be covered.

Meanwhile Mervyn had climbed up the cliff by the path he had pointed out; he now found himself on a wild promontory at the back of the hotel, and wandering to the extreme point he came to a rock of fantastic shape which formed a rude arm-chair, called, he afterwards found, the "Devil's Chair," though, unless that personage have a taste for wild rocky scenery, it is difficult to say why he should have appropriated this seat. Mervyn took possession of it, and lighting his pipe lay back smoking and lazily watching the sea-gulls as they flew backwards and forwards from their

nests in the rocks. All round him was the blue sea, and straight ahead in the dim distance lay Sark, a mass of mauve rock rising from the sea, melting into gray when the sun shone unclouded, and sometimes vanishing altogether in a mist of white light. Mervyn was very comfortable and loth to tear himself away from this fair scene, but looking at his watch he found it was nearly three, so he rose and strolled towards the hotel. To his utter astonishment on entering it he met his father and mother, who with Grace and Sydney had just finished a late lunch, for which on arriving they were only too ready after their drive.

"Where is May?" said Mrs. Kilgour.

"She is—she is coming," stammered Mervyn.

"She is with Harry Brand, I presume. I shall be glad if you will find them, and inform them I have driven out here expressly to speak to them," said Mr. Kilgour.

"Harry Brand! What does it all mean? Mervyn, tell me, where is May?" asked Mrs. Kilgour.

"Mervyn may go and find them—most likely they are not far off—while I explain to you what it all means, and how I have been deceived not only by May, who is far the worst, but by all the others, and by that impertinent young scamp Brand most of all," said Mr. Kilgour.

"Brand knew nothing of May's promise to you, sir; it is only due to him to tell you that," said Mervyn.

"That is no excuse for any of you," said Mr. Kilgour.

"I did not mean to excuse any of us," said Mervyn.

"I am glad of that, for such an attempt would be useless; your conduct is wholly inexcusable; of May's I say nothing till I see her, it is a very serious matter; Grace and Sydney I do not blame as I do you, Mervyn, as they were doubtless led into it. However, more of this hereafter. Go and find May and Brand, I can speak to them out there on the cliff;" and Mervyn, glad to escape, went in search of the lovers.

He was rather alarmed at not seeing anything of them on his way to the bridge, and on reaching the little house he went in and shouted to the old woman, asking if she had seen a lady and gentleman pass during the last hour.

No, the woman was sure no one had passed, besides the tide was up, it was impossible.

Hardly waiting for her answer Mervyn ran to the bridge, and to his horror heard a voice, he was sure was Harry's, shouting. He shouted back as he ran across the bridge, and there to his right, on a rock now more than half covered, stood May and Harry, the sea rolling between him and them.

"Get ropes, two, as quick as you can, and men," shouted Harry.

Back to the little house flew Mervyn.

"Ropes! they are on a rock. Boy, run up to the hotel for help. Fly! bring two men and another rope and a ladder," he screamed, as the boy, who looked scared, ran off up the cliff as straight as he could go, and quicker than Mervyn's longer legs could have taken him. There were two or three life-buoys and a rope hanging in the cottage, being kept there for emergencies; and Mervyn, seizing two of these and the rope, flew back to

the rock, followed by the woman crying and wringing her hands at the sight of the hapless pair.

Mervyn then tied a life-buoy on to one end of the rope and threw it across to Harry, who caught it the first throw. Harry put the life-buoy over May's head and shoulders, and tied the rope, which was a good thick one, round her waist.

"We must have two ropes. Are they coming?" he shouted to Mervyn, who, finding he could do nothing more yet, handed his end of the rope to the woman and went back to hasten the boy.

"Put your gloves on, May, the rope will hurt your hands dreadfully; does that buoy worry you? It is as well to have it in case the rope should break, though I don't think there is any danger of that," said Harry.

"I shall never dare to go without you," said May trembling.

"You must, it is your only chance; besides you can't come to much harm while I have one rope and those over there the other. Here they come, hurrah!" and Harry raised a cheer to keep up May's spirits.

Three men and the boy had returned with Mervyn, with several ropes and a ladder, but the ladder was of no use as it was not long enough to reach from one rock to the other; a second rope was soon thrown across, which was thicker than the first.

"Let go the first rope," shouted Harry, as he fastened the second securely round May's waist. They did so and he gathered it up, and then turning to May said, "Now, may I give the signal?"

'There is not much time to lose;" and then, regardless of the lookers-on and unconscious that Mr. Kilgour was crossing the bridge at the time in full view of them, Harry clasped May in his arms for one brief minute, and then telling May to grasp the rope, shouted, "Haul her up."

As the men on the rock hauled in their rope Harry paid out his, by which means May was steadied and kept from being dashed against the rocks; then came a minute or two of dreadful anxiety and suspense for Harry on his rock, and for Mr. Kilgour and Mervyn on theirs, lest the rope should break. Happily one of the men had had the sense to hold the other life-buoy as a buffer against the edge of the rope, so that as May came closer and her weight told, the edge of the rock should not cut the rope.

May, who when Harry first put her from him and started her on her perilous journey felt more dead than alive, grew more and more alarmed as she felt herself raised and dragged further and further from him and nearer and nearer to safety; instinct made her hold on with both hands to the rope, and it was only the pain of grasping the rope, which cut her palms even through her gloves, that kept her from fainting outright. At last, after what seemed an eternity to May, but was in reality not more than a minute, a hand grasped her arm, and Mr. Kilgour and Mervyn, leaning over the rock, dragged her safely but now quite unconscious on to it.

"Now for Brand," said Mervyn when they had taken off the rope and his father suffered the woman to come to May's assistance.

"The sea is rising, in another five minutes he will be washed off the rock," said Mr. Kilgour, as the men now threw the rope to Harry, who had already made the one he had held May by fast to his waist; he caught the second, and having fastened that too, gave a shout and jumped into the sea; he did this to avoid being dashed against the opposite rock, for in his case there was no one to hold the second rope; then he let them pull him across the tiny straits to the foot of the other rock, partly swimming and partly being dragged across.

"Now the ladder, the rope will never bear him," said Mervyn, and the ladder was dropped down and held from the top. It did not reach him though, so they hauled him up, and then just as he had grasped the lowest rung the rope cracked and he was left hanging by the ladder; up he toiled, using both his bleeding hands and feet, his progress impeded by his dripping clothes. At last a hand reached his, a step or two more and he was amazed to see that Mr. Kilgour was dragging him to the top. He was too exhausted to speak, and lay breathless for a few minutes, unconscious that Mr. Kilgour had left him, to carry the fainting May into the little house on the bridge, while Mervyn held some brandy and water to his lips, calling him all sorts of affectionately abusive names as he did so.



CHAPTER X.

GRACE, SYDNEY, AND MERVYN ENTERTAIN.

AS soon as May showed signs of recovering consciousness Mr. Kilgour left her, thinking the sight of him might upset her in her weak state, and going back to Mervyn and Harry suggested that they should all three return as they came as soon as May was well enough to move.

"You had better go independently of any of us, as May is not well enough to bear being talked to to-day. You can tell her I know all, and have known it all through. I shall be obliged to you, Mr. Brand, if you will call upon me this evening."

"Certainly, sir; I had intended doing so before I left. I will come without fail," said Harry, and then, Mr. Kilgour going away, Mervyn and Harry went to look after May, whom they found recovered from her fainting fit, but who took a long time to mount the cliff to the hotel where they had put up the dog-cart. To the great relief of Mervyn and Harry Brand none of the others were in sight, Mr. Kilgour having decided not to tell his wife of the accident till the trio had started.

As they drove home May learned of her father's visit to Plemont and of his speech to Harry, and rather to Mervyn's astonishment seemed relieved to hear that he was aware of her conduct.

"I never dare have gone to bed to-night till I had told him, and I should have hated it, so I am delighted that he knows," explained May.

"What shall you do, May?" asked Mervyn.

"I shall keep out of his way till he sends for me. I have no wish to hasten matters, and I suppose there must be a scene sooner or later. How I wish I knew what he will say about it!" said May.

May was as good as her word and did not appear to tea, making her fatigue as she very well could an excuse. She remained upstairs during the evening until, after an hour's interview with Harry Brand, Mr. Kilgour sent Grace up to ask if she was well enough to go and speak to him.

"Is Harry there?" asked May, her knees shaking under her, and hearing that he was she obeyed the summons. The interview took place in the dining-room and lasted about an hour, during which time Mervyn, though dying with curiosity himself, was occupied in keeping Sydney and Grace from peeping in through the jalousies or listening at the keyhole, in which labour he only succeeded by boxing Sydney's ears and locking Grace in the drawing-room until they promised to resist the temptation.

All that the younger ones learned was that May said good-bye to Harry in the hall, and then went sobbing up to her own room, from which she did

not reappear that night. Mervyn, however, was more favoured, for May sent Ellen to tell him she wanted to speak to him before he went to bed.

"Well, May, how did you get on?" he asked when he was admitted.

"Oh, Mervyn, I am so happy! I don't deserve it a bit. Father has behaved like an angel," said May, crying for joy.

"What has he done then, and why have you been crying so?"

"Because he was so kind, and I am so sorry I broke my promise. He said he forgave me because he believed I could not help it; that mine was a weak nature, and it was useless to expect me to behave like a strong one, or words to that effect; and then he said that if at the end of two years Harry was in a position to marry he would give his consent, as he saw our happiness depended on it; meanwhile we may correspond, but it is not to be considered an engagement, except of course by Harry and me. Harry goes to-morrow morning, so I have said good-bye to him; will you see him off, Mervyn?" concluded May; and to this Mervyn agreed.

The truth was Mr. Kilgour felt that even if Mr. Brand had led May into danger, he had also saved her life at the risk of his own, and therefore he felt he was in his debt; then again Harry had met the matter so well, had apologized amply for his conduct, and had explained that he would never have suffered May to break her promise had he known she had made it, that Mr. Kilgour felt bound to alter his opinion of him; and when Harry produced a letter from his colonel speaking

of him in most satisfactory terms, Mr. Kilgour finally yielded and gave a half consent to the engagement.

May was really very sorry for her fault, and resolved, even if she were, as her father said, naturally weak, to do her best to become strong. Whether it was this resolution, or the fact that she had her marriage with Harry Brand to look forward to that gave her something to strive for, and made her really happier who can tell? Certain it is May became much more contented, and was seldom heard complaining of the dulness of life, or the misery of the world, or expressing a wish to leave it.

After the last escape Mr. Kilgour strictly forbade any more boating expeditions, bathing from boats, or excursions to caves or castles unless he or Mrs. Kilgour were present to see that they ran into no danger, an order which was received with much disapprobation by all the party.

"A nice dull life we shall have if we are to be allowed no picnics or excursions, and are forbidden to go to parties as everyone here does," grumbled Grace.

"Nonsense, Grace," said Mrs. Kilgour; "your father is quite right. What with our passage here, and Mervyn's bathing exploit, and then May's escape, besides that silly boating party of yours, I am sure you have all been in sufficient danger to last your lives. How your father could ever bring you all over to such a dangerous place I can't think? I am sure it is a mercy you have not all been drowned long ago," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Oh, Mother, there is nothing the matter with the place; we all like Jersey very much," said Grace.

"Then why do you grumble so, Grace? If Father hears you he will whisk us all back to London," said Mervyn.

"I wish he would, then I should be near my dear little Kitty: poor child, I have had a miserable letter from her to-day," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Yes; but Mother, you will very likely have one from her to-morrow just as happy as this is miserable; she was feeling ill or depressed, or perhaps she and Dr. Sandys had had a disagreement," said May.

Mrs. Kilgour would not be persuaded that this was the case, but continued to grieve over Kitty, till the next day, when, as May had foreseen, she received a happier letter from her.

The fact was Kitty's illness was to some extent imaginary, as Dr. Sandys had foreseen. At first she had not complained more than there was cause for or given way to low spirits, but when her father had left for Jersey about a month and she missed his visits, Kitty, who was really getting so much stronger that her forced recumbent position was a punishment to her, grew depressed, and though everything possible was done to amuse her, she became so fretful that at last her nurse could bear it no longer and complained to Dr. Sandys.

"Kitty," said Dr. Sandys that evening when he paid her his last visit, "nurse tells me you have been very cross and fretful for the last week. Now, I can't allow this, or I shall have you get-

ting very ill; so I must put a stop to it at once. I shall not come to see you all to-morrow, nor unless I have a good account of you on the next day either;" and then, without saying good-night, he went away.

This was a terrible punishment to Kitty, who was exceedingly fond of her doctor, and determined to get her own way if possible, she began to cry so violently that nurse grew frightened and sent for Dr. Sandys, who however sent word he should not dream of coming until after the next day, and not then unless Kitty was very good, upon which Kitty quietly sobbed herself to sleep, and the following morning wrote her miserable letter to her mother. So began the first and last battle-royal between Dr. Sandys and his little patient; peace was proclaimed the next day, when Kitty, with tears in her eyes, promised not to be cross again, and kept her promise for the rest of the time she was under Dr. Sandys's charge.

Mr. Kilgour's holiday drew to a close, but before he left he made some different arrangements for the education of Sydney and Grace. Mr. Voisin was discharged, Mr. Kilgour feeling afraid that after the restraint his presence exercised was withdrawn the pair would relapse into their old habits; and Sydney was sent to school, returning every night to La Chasse, while Grace had masters for French, and German, and music, and attended a drawing-class once a week with May. Mr. Kilgour left home somewhat anxious about Mervyn, who had made a great many acquaintances, and was constantly going to parties instead of giving his time to work. Before leaving,

Mr. Kilgour had a serious talk with him, representing that it would be very mortifying to both himself and Mervyn if the latter should fail in his examination at Christmas, which might be very probable unless he gave more attention to his studies and less to tennis and dancing.

Mr. Kilgour left at the end of August, and from that time till October things went on very quietly at La Chasse; the principal event of the day to May and her mother being the mail, whose progress they never wearied of discussing. In the middle of October it was decided that Kitty was well enough to be moved to Jersey, and Mrs. Kilgour, who was to fetch her, insisted upon May accompanying her, declaring she never could undertake such a dreadful journey alone, although both nurse and Kitty were to return with her. May had no objection to the plan; on the contrary, bad sailor as she was, she looked forward to the change, especially as they were to spend a week in London with Mr. Kilgour, who had taken a small furnished house since he returned, finding lodgings unbearable. The great difficulty was to find some one to stay with Grace, whom Mrs. Kilgour did not like leaving with the two boys, though Mervyn indignantly protested he could take care of her.

Grace was growing a very pretty girl, and was quite aware of the fact, and Mrs. Kilgour did not like leaving her to follow her own inclinations for a week; not that she feared any definite harm might come to her, but being naturally nervous, all sorts of imaginary evils suggested themselves to her. At last it occurred to her to ask Miss

Taylor if she would stay with Grace and the boys during her absence. Miss Taylor was delighted at the idea and willingly accepted the invitation, rather to the disgust of Grace, who declared she did not want that old maid prying about and looking after her. It was useless, though, for Grace to resist; the invitation had been given and accepted, so the only thing she could do was to make the best of it by being as agreeable as possible to her chaperône.

Mrs. Kilgour and May left on a Monday and intended to return with Kitty the following Tuesday week. All went well after their departure for the first few days. Miss Taylor was, as the boys described her more lucidly than elegantly, "very jolly," amused them all very much with her gossip, let them do pretty much as they liked, took them for drives nearly every day, and in short made herself very agreeable.

This lasted till Friday morning, when Miss Taylor said to Grace at breakfast:

"My dear Grace, I quite forgot; I must leave you to-morrow. I have promised to go to Gorey to stay with some friends till Monday. I have got out of it once or twice, so I must go this time; I dare not put them off again. But you will only be alone two days, for I don't count Sunday as anything, so I hope your mother will not mind. If by any chance she should stay in London longer than Monday, I can come back to you then."

Grace was really sorry their friend had to leave, so were the boys, and at dinner the next day after she had gone they were quite melancholy; unfortunately too, being Saturday, it was a half-

holiday, and they having nothing particular to do were almost certain to get into mischief.

"What are we to do to-day?" began Grace, "it is so dreadfully dull; we mayn't boat, and we mayn't go to Elizabeth Castle or to any caves, or we might have gone by train to St. Aubin's and walked to Portelet—there is a lovely cave there, one of the girls told me."

"Why can't we go to St. Aubin's Castle and fish?" said Sydney.

"Because it is one of the places we are forbidden to go to, and we don't want any more accidents or escapes," said Mervyn.

"There is a dance at the Owens' this afternoon, how I wish we were going to it! but if we never entertain, how can we expect to be asked out?" said Grace, looking very forlorn.

"There are heaps of parties here in the winter, the fellows tell me, Grace, but I suppose we sha'n't be asked to any," put in Sydney.

"I would not go if we were, unless Father were to give a party too; it is different for Mervyn, people are glad to have him, because there are so few gentlemen in the island," said Grace.

"Grace," said Mervyn, "I have been thinking suppose we were to give a party; they don't come home till Tuesday, do you think we could manage to have an afternoon dance on Monday? It is rather short notice, isn't it?"

"Never mind that, it is a splendid idea; we will do it, Mervyn, it will be no end of fun," said Grace.

"But what will Father say when he hears of it?" said Sydney.

"He is not likely to hear of it unless you tell

him, and if you do, I'll make you remember it, I promise you," said Mervyn.

"I tell Father! When did I ever tell tales of any of you, I should like to know? I am not a sneak, nor do I do sneaking things when Father and Mother are away," said Sydney angrily.

"Look here, young Syd, I won't allow you to be impertinent to me; you hold your tongue or I'll turn you out of the room," said Mervyn.

"I am going of my own accord. I won't have anything to do with you or your party either," said Sydney, leaving the room.

"Oh! Mervyn, why did you quarrel with Sydney? Now he won't join, and we shall want boys, and he knows so many. I wish you had not said that," said Grace.

"Go and try persuade him to come back, Grace. Tell him he won't get any parties at Christmas if he does not have his friends to this," said Mervyn.

Grace went, but returned to say it was no use. Sydney would not tell of them, but he would have nothing to do with the party, because it would make his father very angry.

"Very well, then, let him keep away. We will put him in Coventry till the party is over. I hope he will enjoy that," said Mervyn, who was not in the best of tempers, the truth being he knew they were about to do a very wrong thing, and he was angry with his little brother for the tacit rebuke he gave them by refusing to join.

"Now let us make out a list of people and write the invitations, and then we must talk Ellen over to help us. We can't manage without her," said Grace.

"I tell you what, Grace, we must pay for everything we have ourselves. I have plenty of money. I don't spend half my allowance here. Have you any?"

"Yes; I will go shares. Of course we must pay for it, or it would be dishonourable. I never meant to book the things to Mother's account," said Grace.

"Here is a letter for you, Grace, from Mother. What does she say?" asked Sydney, bringing in a letter he had taken from the postman, who was just delivering the English mail.

"You are in Coventry," said Mervyn shortly.

Sydney made no reply, and went away feeling hurt, for their mother's letters were considered public property while she was in England.

"Mervyn, they are not coming home till the end of the week, so we need not have it on Monday after all."

"No; but we had better say Tuesday, or we may have Miss Taylor back. You can send for her on Tuesday evening when the party is over," said Mervyn.

Accordingly the invitations were written and sent out for an afternoon dance from three till seven on the following Tuesday, and then Grace and Mervyn talked of nothing else till the day arrived. During all this time they never spoke to Sydney except to ask him what he would take at meals. But Sydney contrived to see as little of them as possible, spending the evenings with Ellen after he had done his work.

On Tuesday morning, when he had gone to school, Mervyn and Grace turned most of the fur-

niture out of the drawing-room, and took up the carpet, Mervyn declaring Jersey people would just as soon think of waltzing on the sands as on a carpet. They had just completed their task, and were waxing the floor, when a carriage drove up to the door, and in walked Miss Taylor.

"Well, how have you got on? I came to see and to tell you it is a very late mail. There has been a fog. I suppose she is not at Guernsey yet, so you won't see your people till about five o'clock."

"But they are not coming to-day. Do you mind going into the dining-room? We have just cleared the drawing-room," said Grace.

"Oh, is Ellen having a spring cleaning in the autumn?"

"No; we are going to have a little dance this afternoon. Just ten couples," said Mervyn.

"But, my dear Mervyn, how could you think of such a thing? What would your Father say? Oh! you naughty children. I wish I had not left you. I feel I am to blame for this."

"Do come to it, will you? and don't tell of us," said Grace.

"Indeed I will do neither, come nor tell. I will come to-morrow and scold you till they come home if you like; but I will have nothing to do with this party," said Miss Taylor, and on this understanding she left them to their own devices, managing to keep her countenance till she reached the carriage, when she went into fits of laughter.

At three o'clock the guests began to arrive, and by half-past the dancing had begun in good earnest. They had hired a woman to play for

them, Grace declaring it would be no fun if they had to take it in turns to play for themselves. Mervyn and Grace made a very good host and hostess, and if their young friends wondered what had become of Mrs. Kilgour, they soon forgot her absence, and ceased to trouble themselves about it.

Sydney, not wishing to be seen, or to have anything to do with the matter, went for a walk after school, intending to remain out as long as he could, and finding the mail was not in, he walked to the pier to see her arrive, when to his astonishment the first person he recognized on board was his father.

Here was a contretemps! What would Grace and Mervyn do? And above all, what would Mr. Kilgour say and do when he found the house turned topsy-turvy, and Grace and Mervyn entertaining in his absence? Could he possibly prevent his father from returning home for the next few hours?

All these questions flitted through Sydney's mind as he watched the passengers land, and at last Mr. Kilgour came ashore.

"Have none of the others come, Father?" asked Sydney.

"No, my boy; they cross on Saturday; but as I found I could get away for a few days this week, I came over to look after you three. How are Grace and Mervyn?" asked Mr. Kilgour.

"They are very well," said Sydney, thinking how very sorry they would be to see their father.

"And how have you got on since your mother left?"

"Very well while Miss Taylor was with us.

Shall you go straight home, Father? Would not you like to go to the club for an hour or two? I could take your bag home for you," suggested Sydney.

"No; we will take a fly, Syd. I am very tired, and shall be glad of a bath before tea," said Mr. Kilgour.

This was Sydney's one hope of a reprieve for the other two, and finding that failed, he was at a loss what to do. He would not tell, because he had promised he would not, so he must just let things take their course. Personally, he was very glad his father had come, for he had found it very dull the last few days; but he was truly sorry for Grace and Mervyn, who would certainly get into trouble.

As they drove up they heard the sound of dance-music through the open windows, and saw a couple cooling themselves in the verandah.

"This is very odd, Sydney. Who is that girl and that young fellow in the verandah? It sounds as if they were dancing, only it is impossible," said Mr. Kilgour, ringing the bell.

The door was opened immediately by Ellen in a very smart cap, and then to Mr. Kilgour's utter amazement he saw the dining-room was turned into a refreshment-room, the drawing-room into the dancing-room, and the furniture moved into nooks and corners in the hall.

"What on earth is all this, Ellen?" sternly demanded Mr. Kilgour.

"Oh! sir, it is only a few friends Miss Grace and Mr. Mervyn have asked in for a dance this afternoon. Master Sydney has had nothing to do

with it; but if you knew your papa was coming home, you might have told them, Master Sydney, though they have not spoke to you for days," said Ellen.

"Master Sydney knew nothing about it. Just tell Mr. Mervyn and his sister that I have returned, but that finding my house occupied by their guests, I shall be obliged to go to an hotel for dinner, after which I shall return here, and I expect to find the house in proper order. I shall speak to you further on the subject also, Ellen. Come along, Sydney, we will drive back to town and dine at the Pomme d'Or," and with this Mr. Kilgour left the house again.

At the first opportunity Ellen caught hold of Grace, and told her her master had come back, delivering Mr. Kilgour's message. Grace flew to Mervyn, who was as annoyed and alarmed as she was by the news. All pleasure was gone for both of them. Their one idea now was to get rid of their guests as quickly as possible, and endeavour to get the house straight before Mr. Kilgour returned. With this object in view they hurried over the programme; but it was seven o'clock before the last guest departed.

"Oh, Mervyn! what are we to do? I declare I should like to run away. Fancy Father coming home tired out with that long passage, and being obliged to go to an hotel. How shall we ever face him?" said Grace sitting on the stairs, as the door closed on the last guest.

"The first thing is to try and get the house straight. We must put down that old carpet at once, and I am so tired now," said Mervyn.

"So am I. Call Ellen to help you with the carpet, and while she is doing that I will clear the dining-room. Once that carpet is down, we can soon get straight."

"Oh, Miss Grace! Your papa is in a way. I never saw him so angry before. He is going to give it to me too as well as to you, and I am not sure I sha'n't lose my place," said Ellen.

"Well, it is no use imagining the worst. Let us get the house straight as quickly as possible," said Mervyn, and then they set to and worked with a will for the next two hours, by which time the rooms had assumed their normal condition again, and Grace and Mervyn were resting from their labours when Mr. Kilgour and Sydney walked in.

Naturally Mr. Kilgour was very angry, and for the next quarter of an hour the culprits had a very bad time of it. Not a single invitation should they be allowed to accept that year—not till Christmas only, but the whole winter—such a piece of deliberate impertinence had never before been heard of. How dared they do such a thing? What did they mean by such conduct? What had they to say for themselves? Nothing. No excuse could be offered. It was almost an unpardonable offence. In short, Mr. Kilgour scolded them roundly, and ended by ordering the sobbing Grace up to bed, while Mervyn came in for a second dose on account of his work which he was neglecting; and then, determined to do the thing thoroughly while he was about it, Mr. Kilgour finished up by giving Ellen a good talking to for her share in the matter.

"How long is he going to keep us in disgrace?" said Mervyn to Grace the next day, Mr. Kilgour not having spoken to them at breakfast.

"I don't know. Isn't it dreadful, Mervyn—no parties the whole winter? I do call it hard. He might have had a little mercy!"

"The only comfort is he did not come in before all the others and row us then—expose us, as he calls it—he had a great mind to, he said, and only consideration for their feelings stopped him. No feeling for us, he was careful to explain," said Mervyn.

"I wish we had never given the wretched party. We might have had such a nice time with Father these few days. It will be dreadfully dull for him, too, if he is going to quarrel with us all the time; he will have no one but Sydney to speak to," said Grace considerately.

"That is what I have been thinking. Look here, Grace, we had better go and tell him we are sorry. He won't come round till we do. Let us go now and get it over. I'll be spokesman," said Mervyn, and Grace, little as she relished it, thought it best to accompany him.



CHAPTER XI.

A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

JUST as Grace had risen to accompany Mervyn, Miss Taylor was announced, and was not a little surprised to hear of Mr. Kilgour's return.

"But is not it dreadfully hard for us not to be allowed to go to a single party the whole winter? Father is so dreadfully strict," said Grace.

"I don't think it is hard at all; it serves you both right. It is not one whit more than you deserve. On the contrary, I think it is rather lenient; for at your age, Grace, you are much better at home for the next two years till you are old enough to come out. For my part, I have no patience with this Jersey fashion of allowing girls of fifteen to go to grown-up parties. It spoils them. They lose all their freshness before they are introduced, besides getting their heads crammed with a lot of nonsense. And how is it possible for Mervyn to attend to his studies if he is always gadding about to dances from morning till night? Depend upon it your father is right, and I shall tell him so; but I will see if I can make peace

for you two also. Then I sha'n't have had my drive for nothing this morning, as of course I sha'n't stay since Mr. Kilgour has returned," said Miss Taylor, as she went in search of him.

Before she left she peeped in again at Grace and Mervyn, and told them if they went now she thought it would be all right.

"But, my dear Grace," she added, "you have put your foot in it, and you will have to take the consequences. I have succeeded in dissuading your father from packing you off at once to Guernsey College; but he means to look after you very sharply for the future."

Grace found this was the case, for Mr. Kilgour informed her that he intended to engage Mr. Voisin again for her and Kitty, and that instead of her attending classes or going to town for her music lessons, he should arrange for the music and German lessons to be given at home. French, of course, Mr. Voisin would teach them, and for the present she must give up drawing.

"And I forbid you to go outside this garden except with your mother or May, unless she or I give you permission occasionally to go for a walk with Mervyn."

This was a great punishment to Grace, chiefly because she saw her father had no confidence in her, and also because she liked to be independent and hated asking permission to do this or that. However, she dared not say anything; but she showed her wounded feelings by walking out of the room with her head in the air as soon as her father had finished speaking, and then wrote a long letter to May entreating her to come back

at once, and giving such a picture of Mr. Kilgour's cruelty and her misery that May was really alarmed, and if they had not intended crossing the night she received this letter would have arranged to do so.

For the next few days Grace and her father were not on terms. She declined to go out with him, and being too proud to ask permission to go out with Mervyn or Miss Taylor, who called for her once or twice, she was reduced to the garden, where she spent most of her time playing with Tan, and feeling very much hurt and ill-used, crying a good deal when no one was there to see, and assuming a don't-care manner when her father was present.

At last matters came to a crisis on Saturday evening by Mervyn asking Grace if she was going to meet her mother and sisters the next day.

"Certainly not," said Grace. "I shall meet them at the garden-gate, the limit of my prison. I should require a body-guard to accompany me to the pier, and anxious as I am to see them, I prefer liberty such as it is to having my steps dogged."

Mr. Kilgour, for whose benefit this speech was made, took no notice of it, but appeared engrossed in his book, and Mervyn left the room.

"Grace, if you don't go to the pier, will you go to the French service with me to-morrow?" asked Sydney presently.

"I am not going to church at all. My soul is no more my own than the rest of me. I can't even be trusted to go to church. I am now writing to Mr. Carteret to tell him I must give up my class in the Sunday-schools," said Grace.

"There is no need for you to do that, Grace. Run away for a few minutes, Sydney, I want to speak to Grace," said Mr. Kilgour; and when Sydney reappeared half an hour later, Grace, who had evidently been crying a good deal, was sitting on her father's knee with her head on his shoulder. She rose when Sydney came in, and destroyed the note to Mr. Carteret, saying as she did so:

"I am going with Father to meet the others, Sydney, so I sha'n't be able to go to the French service with you, because it will be a late mail; but if May will come I will go next Sunday," by which Sydney knew a reconciliation had taken place, and that Grace was reduced to submission.

The next day the others arrived safely after a rather rough passage, which seemed longer May thought than that by the ordinary boats which call at Guernsey, the Sunday boat by which they came coming straight on from Southampton. Kitty was grown since they last saw her. She was as tall as May now, and was looking very much better. She was able to walk a little, and had discarded her plaster of Paris jacket for some weeks. She had not been home a week before they all noticed the difference in her spirits. She seldom complained of anything, though still obliged to lie flat on her back for some hours every day. But if they were struck by the difference in Kitty, so was she by the alteration in all of them. There were no complaints about allowances now, the dinner was eaten and apparently enjoyed without every dish being criticised as formerly; and neither Grace nor Mervyn had the

airs they used to indulge in, while May was a different creature, and even Mrs. Kilgour seemed to find one servant less trouble if not so comfortable as six or seven.

Mr. Kilgour returned to London at the end of the week to remain till Christmas, previous to which Mervyn, who had to go up for his examination, was to stay a week with his father, and they would both return together on Christmas eve. Till that time things went on very quietly at La Chasse. Grace and Kitty got on excellently with Mr. Voisin, now there was no Sydney to lead Grace into mischief. May heard by every mail, from Harry Brand, who was getting on as well as could be wished, and Mervyn amused himself with taking long walks, or lounging about the pier, and worrying his mother every time an invitation came to allow him to accept it. He had a great many friends, and being naturally of rather an idle disposition, he was easily persuaded to give up working for some more congenial employment, until the week before his examination, when he worked day and night. The result was, that he feared he had not passed, and he returned from London with his father in rather low spirits, very anxious to know his fate, for which however he must wait two or three weeks. A few days after Christmas the Kilgours, May, Grace, and Mervyn, received an invitation to a fancy ball to be given a fortnight afterwards. May had no wish to go; she did not care for parties, where Harry Brand was not present, so she declined, and Grace of course had to do the same; and did it without grumbling too, to Mr. Kil-

gour's surprise and satisfaction. Mervyn was exceedingly anxious to go, and begged hard to be allowed to accept the invitation, but Mr. Kilgour was firm, and refused to allow him to do so, unless, indeed, the list of the late examination should be published before the ball, when if Mervyn had passed with honours, he would consent to his going, but on no other terms. Accordingly, Mervyn called on the people, and asked to be allowed to leave it an open question, explaining the circumstances. Every day he looked anxiously for the list, which never appeared, and he became more and more restless; for having felt sure it would be published before the date of the ball, he had privately hired a costume—that of a Christy Minstrel, which he smuggled into the house and showed to May under promise of secrecy. At last the night arrived, and no list having been published, poor Mervyn was obliged to spend the evening at home at La Chasse instead of disporting himself among his friends with a blackened face and a long-tailed coat. At their usual hour they all went to bed, no one but Mervyn, or perhaps Grace, thinking much about the ball.

Now it happened that Kitty was still very nervous at night. It was one of the effects of her illness, and at this time she would no more have dared to sleep alone than to lead an army to battle. So since her return she had shared Grace's room, which was over the drawing-room, and next to May's. Suddenly about twelve o'clock that night Kitty woke up, fancying she heard a noise as of some one in the verandah beneath their window.

"Grace, I heard some one in the verandah," said Kitty.

"Nonsense, Kitty, you are always fancying you hear some one. Go to sleep. We never have burglars in Jersey," said Grace, who was only half awake.

"I am sure I did, though. I think I shall go and wake May," said Kitty, who was shaking with fear.

"You little goose, be quiet and listen. If you hear it again we will get up and look. Shall I strike a light?"

"Please," said Kitty, "they say it always frightens thieves away." So Grace struck a light, and was soon fast asleep, while Kitty lay listening and straining every nerve to hear the noise again. The sound of her own heart beating seeming to her excited brain so loud that she fancied May could hear it in the next room. At last, after lying awake for nearly an hour, and hearing no other noise except an occasional creaking of some piece of furniture, which made her start up, Kitty began to think Grace was right, and that she had imagined she heard some one in the verandah, so she extinguished the light, and soon after fell asleep.

How long she slept Kitty did not know; but it seemed a very short time to her, though in reality it was two or three hours; but she suddenly woke up again—this time with a slight scream—for in her sleep she had heard the garden-gate close, and now heard footsteps across the gravel.

"Grace! Grace! there is some one in the garden. Wake up! Listen! listen!—don't you hear them?" she cried.

"Is there? Yes; so there is. I hear footsteps. Don't be so frightened, Kitty. I will strike a light and we will wake father!" So saying Grace lighted the candle, and the two girls slipped on their slippers and dressing-gowns, ran across the passage to their father's room, and knocked at the door.

"Father! get up, there is a man in the garden. We have heard him distinctly," cried Grace.

"Very well. I will come as quickly as possible; don't make a noise and don't be frightened," called out Mr. Kilgour.

May's door now opened carefully, and she came out looking very much alarmed.

"Have you heard anything, May?" asked Grace.

"Yes, dear; there is some one breaking into the house. Come into my room and listen. I have heard them; they are in the verandah. They have opened one of the shutters, and they are now trying to get in at the window," said May.

"I know," exclaimed Grace. "Give me your candle, May, quick. I will run down and lock the drawing-room door, so that they can't get any farther till Father goes."

"Grace, don't go. Here, put my pillow over your head," exclaimed May, throwing a pillow after Grace, which only extinguished the candle; but Grace ran on, and turned the key in the drawing-room door just as Mr. Kilgour appeared, having hurried into some clothes.

He stopped for a moment at Mervyn's door, but after putting his head inside, decided not to call him and went down-stairs alone.

"Oh, May! my heart is beating so. Take me

away somewhere, I am so frightened," exclaimed Kitty, whose teeth were chattering and she shaking like an aspen, her cheeks pale with terror; and she clung to May as a drowning man clings to anything he can catch hold of. May was quite as much alarmed to see Kitty in such a state as at the robber; so she hastened into her mother's room with the child, where they all three locked themselves in, forgetting poor Grace, who was in the hall witnessing the scuffle that was going on, and armed with a poker, which she was determined to use if her father was in any danger, for he had only caught up a riding-whip, which he appeared to be applying very freely to the intruder to judge from the repeated strokes Grace heard.

At last she ventured into the drawing-room and found the scuffle was going on in the verandah, one window being half open. She crept towards it, holding the poker behind her, and saw Mr. Kilgour belabouring, with a will, a man who seemed to offer very little resistance, and who to Grace's astonishment was black, or else the dim light deceived her. At last Mr. Kilgour seemed to think the burglar sufficiently punished, and ordering him to be off the same way he came in, he re-entered the drawing-room, and closed and fastened the shutters and window.

"Why, it was a black man, Father, wasn't it?" said Grace.

"Yes, a Christy Minstrel. I don't think he will ever attempt to get in at this house again," said Mr. Kilgour. "Were you very much frightened, Grace?"

"No; it is Kitty who is so frightened. I rather



enjoyed it," said Grace, as they made their way upstairs to laugh at the three courageous people who had locked themselves up regardless of the others, being all three "women naturally born to fears." So was Grace for the matter of that, but when her blood was up, her courage conquered her natural timidity, and with her father to protect her she would have faced an army of burglars. All her fear vanished as soon as he appeared, and as she afterwards said, she would have been grievously disappointed if it had turned out to be a false alarm.

"I am nervous, but I am not a coward," Grace often said of herself, and after this night no one contradicted her; and, indeed, it was perfectly true. Nervous all the Kilgours were—highly-wrought natures, keenly susceptible to physical pain, and yet every one of them would brace themselves up to undergo it if necessary, and confess afterwards that the mental agony they underwent in making up their minds—to have a tooth drawn for instance—was a thousand times worse than the pain itself.

It would be a curious psychological study—if, indeed, such an inquiry could be made—to discover in what degree the same pain is felt by different natures. Of course the question can be answered broadly by the reply, that the higher the nature, the more perfect the organization and consequently the intenser is the susceptibility to pain; but we are inclined to think that this susceptibility to mere physical pain varies far more than is generally supposed, just as it is certain the capacity for suffering mental pain is infinitely

greater in some natures than in others. This capacity varies as much as the notes in the scale; the highest and the lowest natures bearing it best —the highest because they are the highest, the lowest because being the lowest they feel it least. And so we sometimes hear people pride themselves on their courage in being able to bear physical pain well, who no more know what pain is to some of their fellow-men than a worm knows the pain of having a tooth stopped.

But to return to the Kilgours. Grace gave her mother and sisters a graphic description of the scene between Mr. Kilgour and the intruder, but no sooner did May hear that he was dressed as a Christy Minstrel than she started up and hastened to seek Mervyn. She went straight to his room, but finding as she feared that it was empty and that the bed had not been slept in, she felt certain the intruder was no other than her brother, who had been to the ball and had paid dearly for his fun. May was puzzled at first what to do, her one fear being that her brother should run away; and yet she did not like to tell her father who it was, in case he had not recognised Mervyn, and of this she was by no means certain, for never in his life before had Mr. Kilgour been known to raise his hand against one of his children. And yet May thought it was rather like him to pay Mervyn out in his own coin, and since he chose to break into the house in disguise, to ignore the disguise and punish him accordingly. It would be a kind of retribution which Mr. Kilgour, who had a very keen sense of humour, would probably adopt; and whether he identified

Mervyn or not would probably for ever remain a mystery, as he would certainly never tell any one. May thought he did recognise him, because she had observed he was very silent, and seemed more moved than the encounter would have warranted when he came upstairs with Grace. After considering a minute May seized Mervyn's ulster and a hat, and putting them on ran lightly down-stairs, and opening the hall door as quietly as she could, went out into the garden. It was pitch dark, the only light being a patch on the gravel-walk, the reflection of the candles in her mother's room; but May knew the way, and if she was frightened, her anxiety for Mervyn overcame her fear.

Out at the garden gate and down the road ran May as fast as her feet could carry her. At last she saw something moving in front of her, and calling Mervyn she stopped short and clung breathless to some palings, for one moment a horrible fear crossing her mind lest it should not be Mervyn after all; but to her joy the figure stopped and said "Hulloa!" in Mervyn's voice. Reassured May started again and overtook him, dressed as she expected in the nigger's costume.

"Mervyn, it is I, May. Come back, dear; the door is open."

"No, thank you, May. After this you may forget you have a brother Mervyn. I presume you are aware how my father treated me; and since he has turned me from his door he has no one but himself to blame if he never sees me again," said Mervyn bitterly, for he was smarting under the treatment he had met with.

"Nonsense, Mervyn; he did nothing of the kind. He turned a supposed burglar away from the window he was breaking in at. Come back, dear."

"May, if I thought my father had recognised me nothing should induce me to return," said Mervyn.

"But who supposes he did? Mervyn, you shall come. I dare not go back alone, and I will not leave hold of you till you are safe in the house again," said May, and after a little more persuasion Mervyn consented to return with her.

Was it May's fancy or was it really her father who was in the garden on their return, and who crept silently into the house in front of them? May felt sure it was he, looking for Mervyn, but she kept her own counsel and said nothing to her brother, who had not noticed the figure.

The next morning at breakfast nothing was talked of but the adventure of the previous night, Sydney, who had slept through the noise, wanting to hear all about it from Grace and Kitty; but to May's relief he had gone to school before Mervyn appeared at the table.

"Mervyn, how did you get that mark on your face?" asked Kitty, noticing a slight wheal on Mervyn's cheek, which had been inflicted accidentally in the scuffle.

"Oh, it is nothing; a bruise, that is all," said Mervyn evasively, helping himself to some pie as calmly as he could; and then Grace began the story of the Christy Minstrel again for his benefit.

"That will do, Grace. We have heard that story before this morning, besides Mervyn knows

it. I told him last night when you and Kitty had gone back to bed," said May, and for a wonder Grace was silenced.

Poor Mervyn's cup of humiliation, however, was not yet drained, for that day when the postman came he received a letter from the War-office telling him he had failed to satisfy the examiners, and was required to present himself again either at Easter or in July next. This was a bitter disappointment to him, and not the least part of the mortification was having to break the news to the others, especially to his father, who was out when the letters arrived. However, it must be done; so Mervyn went to the drawing-room where his mother and sisters were reading their letters, and told them he was plucked, and then leaving the letter with them, he retired to the dining-room to ruminate in silence on his failure and wonder how his father would take it.

Failure is at all times mortifying, but failure where success was probable and the result of idleness and carelessness rather than of inability, is doubly mortifying, and Mervyn's self-reproach was very great. No one, not even his father, could blame him more than he blamed himself, as he sat with his elbows on the table and his chin in his hands chewing the cud of the official letter. No one interrupted him, his sisters guessing he would rather be left alone till the first bitterness of his disappointment had worn off. At last, about five o'clock, Mr. Kilgour came in from the streaming rain; for it was a wet day, and quite in harmony with Mervyn's feelings. Going to the drawing-room he learned of his son's

failure, and shortly after having changed his wet clothes he went to the dining-room, where Mervyn still sat.

"I have been ploughed," said Mervyn, looking round.

"So I hear. I am not surprised. I expected it, nor am I altogether sorry. It is perhaps the best thing that could have happened to you. Hold up your face, Mervyn; I want to look at that scar on your cheek," said Mr. Kilgour, going up to Mervyn and raising his face with one hand, while he put the other round his neck.

"Never mind the scar, Father. I don't care for that," said Mervyn.

"I do," said Mr. Kilgour, and he stooped and kissed it.

What followed it is unnecessary to tell; sufficient to say Mervyn knew by that action alone that his father had recognised him, for the scar was an accidental cut of the riding-whip.



CHAPTER XII.

ON THE CORBIERÈS.

FAILURE is often a prelude to future success. It is notably so in all the arts; a great failure is often the best thing that can happen to an artist; by it he learns his faults; it is the darkness before the dawn—the dawn usually of a brighter day; it is the end of a period, the following period being one of greater light and knowledge than the past; it is a transition, a chrysalis state, from which the poor grub is bursting into the beautiful moth or butterfly, a different creature, which has acquired new powers and has learned to fly.

If this be so with poets and artists, it is so also in a smaller way with ordinary mortals; failure is a very wholesome discipline for us all, it puts us on our mettle; we learn by painful experience our weak points, and we endeavour to amend them if we are made of the right stuff, as Mervyn was. As his father told him his failure was the best thing that could have happened to him; it caused him to go softly for some weeks, but it stirred him up to work hard and use all his

energy to prevent a second mishap of the kind. No need now for any one to complain that he did not study; he studied hard enough, for he was bent on going up again at Easter, and determined to pass this time, with honours if possible, though he kept this intention to himself.

It had been a long winter to Mrs. Kilgour, for her husband returned to London at the end of January, and was not expected till Easter again; the young people were working at their books, and always found plenty of amusement in walks for their leisure hours, so to them the time passed quickly enough.

"How I should like to go to some place and watch the sea to-day; I am sure it must be splendid!" said Grace one day at the end of March, when a strong equinoctial gale was blowing.

"Well, if you can walk to La Moye from St. Aubin's I'll go with you," said Mervyn. "I have been working all the morning till I feel quite stupid."

Grace professed her readiness, and Mrs. Kilgour giving the permission Grace was obliged to ask, she and Mervyn started, May declining the walk.

Their road lay first through the pretty village of St. Brelade's, which is encircled by high cliffs that follow the curve of the bay, so that they were to some extent sheltered from the wind; but as soon as they mounted the hill at the back of the little church, whose churchyard wall is washed by the sea at high tide—and a sweeter spot it would be hard to find—they felt the full fury of the gale. They now had to struggle

over a hill the sides of which are covered with heather, and at times Mervyn had to help Grace along, the wind was so strong, but by dint of perseverance they reached La Moye, a signalling station, and throwing themselves down on the top of the cliff they watched the glorious sight they had come to see.

A rough sea! who can describe it? What pen or pencil can give an adequate or even a feeble idea of the wondrous beauty of that spectacle? The mighty waves rolling, tearing, rushing wildly in, dashing furiously against the rocks, embracing each other one moment to be separated for ever into a million sparkling particles the next; the white foam dashing up high into the air, flashing like diamonds in the sunlight, splashing with its salt spray all within its reach, and then, as if the foam were only the sport of the waves, their sunny side, there lay large pieces of meerschaum on the troubled sea, the real sign of its anger. A large rock nearly covered by the water lay in front of Grace and Mervyn, and against this the chief fury of the waves seemed to be directed as they came seething, churning, boiling round it, and then, as if in scorn and anger at their inability to move it, tossing themselves indignantly in the air and flinging their spray far and wide.

"Such signs of Love old Ocean gives,
One cannot help but think he lives,"

quoted Grace.

Thinking and dreaming each their own thoughts Mervyn and Grace sat watching the magnificent

scene before them until the cold warned them to move, and with a last lingering look they tore themselves away from the fascinating sight, for there is no more fascinating amusement than watching the sea—the very monotony possesses a subtle charm which chains the observer to the spot.

"When we leave Jersey the dearest friend I shall leave behind me, and certainly the one I shall regret most, will be the sea," said Grace as they walked home.

"Complimentary to your friends or acquaintances here," said Mervyn.

"The sea never bores me, and people do very often; the sea understands one; besides it has so much to say that is worth listening to, which is more than I can say of most people. Mervyn, when do you go up for your examination?"

"This day three weeks, and I hope I shall pass this time; I think I shall, too," returned Mervyn, and he thought truly, for when five weeks later the list was published Mervyn's name was among the first three, to his great delight, and indeed to the satisfaction of the whole family. Mr. Kilgour showed his appreciation of his son's success by giving him a handsome gold watch and chain, Mervyn's silver one being transferred to Sydney, whose gratitude knew no bounds.

"May," said Mervyn, "I don't think Father can be poor now; he seems to have plenty of money. I am not at all sure that it was not a dodge of his bringing us all over here, to cure us of complaining."

"I have sometimes thought so too, but if so

Mother is in the secret, because we are living on her money. Father would never say so unless it were literally true. If that was his plan it has succeeded, for we certainly are a much more contented party than we were in London," said May.

"I will sound Uncle John on the subject, he is coming over in June with Father for two or three weeks; and I will tell you what, May, he is so fond of boating he is sure to take us some excursions."

"I don't think he will get any of us girls or Mother into a boat again, and if he takes you boys and Father I am sure we shall be in a fever till you return," said May, and then the conversation dropped.

Mr. Kilgour's brother was a clergyman, and, as Mervyn said, very fond of boating—river-boating, for his living was in the heart of England, and he had not much leisure or opportunity for yachting. His one idea after he arrived in Jersey was to go to Sark; he was always harping on it, and looking out daily for an excursion boat to be advertised. It was useless for Mrs. Kilgour to tell him that if it were only possible to drive there she would gladly accompany him; equally useless for Mr. Kilgour to impress upon him that the best way of going to Sark was to go to Guernsey, whence little steamers made the passage to Sark twice a week. Mr. John Kilgour had heard Sark was a little Paradise, and see it he would. He did not care to go to Guernsey; Sark was all he cared to visit, and he would go from Jersey. At last getting desperate he declared that unless an excursion boat ran the next

week he would hire a cutter and take them all over.

"All, John; you must be mad; the girls could not possibly go in an excursion boat, and as for hiring a cutter, it is out of the question," said Mrs. Kilgour.

"Not at all, and if you won't let your girls go by an excursion boat that will be my best plan, for I am bent on taking them with me; so I shall go down to the harbour this morning with Mervyn and see if I can meet with one," returned Mr. John Kilgour.

"I am sure I hope and trust he won't meet with one," said Mrs. Kilgour when he was gone; but her hopes were destined to disappointment, for Mr. John Kilgour returned in high spirits with the news that he had hired a little sailing-boat to take them over the next day. He proposed staying a night at the hotel and returning on the following day.

"We are to leave the pier at ten sharp to-morrow morning. The man wanted me to say eight or nine, but I thought it better not; the girls are much more likely to be sea-sick if they have to get up early and start after a hurried breakfast; so if we leave this house at half-past nine we shall be in ample time. It takes three hours with a fair wind, so we shall get there about one. I propose we take our luncheon with us, and go to the hotel for dinner; then we will leave about five the next day, so as to give us ample time to be home before dark. What do you say to that, girls?"

The girls said very little, being really very

nervous about the passage; but not liking to appear ungrateful they put the best face they could on the matter, and talked about what fun it would be when they reached Sark, how they would explore the island, and then how nice it would be going to the hotel.

The next morning the party set off in high spirits, Mr. Kilgour and his brother and all the young people, but nothing would induce Mrs. Kilgour to venture with them, though she went to the pier to see them start.

It was a lovely morning, bright and sunny, and a fresh cool breeze was blowing. The sea looked a little rough, but the boatman said the wind was in their favour, so that they would not feel the swell much. Their ship, as Mervyn called it, was a small open sailing boat, with one mast and a couple of sail—a main-sail and a jib; she was managed by two men, the captain (as the owner of any ordinary little boat likes to be called) and his mate.

Kitty was half inclined to return to La Chasse with her mother, but fearing to vex her uncle, with whom she was a great favourite, she overcame the inclination and took the seat he offered her by his side in the stern. The rugs and their carpet-bags were packed in with the basket of provisions, and then they started.

At first they were all in high spirits, and enjoyed the movement, though the little boat was rather lively and they made but little progress.

"We have the tide against us, sir, and shall have all the way; it is just turned," said the captain.

"Yes, but if the wind keeps as it is we shall

go along famously when once we are round Noirmont Point," said the mate.

By the time they reached Noirmont Point May, who had been looking very pale and been very quiet, began to be ill.

"It is only the swell round the point, Miss. You will be all right as soon as we have made it," said the mate.

"I don't think we shall get to Sark in three hours to-day," said Mervyn; "we have been an hour crossing St. Aubin's Bay."

"Never mind; this is most enjoyable. What could be more delicious than sailing along on this exquisite day, under a cloudless sky? And see, the coast is so near it is like a succession of panoramic views," said Mr. John Kilgour.

Professions of intense enjoyment in a descending scale from him down to poor May followed; May feebly protesting her pleasure in spite of feeling so ill that she was lying flat at the bottom of the boat. Presently they reached Portelet Bay with its island tower in the midst, by which time Kitty had succumbed, and was lying by May's side. The wind now seemed rising, and though in their favour, there was a heavy swell which made the boat pitch and toss, and impeded their progress. After nearly three hours of this they reached the Corbières, when the swell was much worse, and every one but the men and Mr. Kilgour was ill.

"This is enjoyable, certainly," said Mervyn satirically.

"I am afraid we are all shocking sailors," said Uncle John.

"You must be a good sailor indeed not to be ill in this sea, sir; but it will be better as soon as we get past the Corbières. There is a swell on here on the calmest day," said the mate.

"I hope it will, or we shall have to turn back, I fear, unless Kitty and May get better," said Mr. John Kilgour.

"Oh, no; we have started. Let us go on. Besides, this is the worst bit," cried Mervyn and Sydney.

No more was said about turning back for another hour and a half, by which time they had nearly lost sight of Jersey, and were all straining their eyes to detect the loom of Sark, but in vain.

"Well, captain," said Mr. Kilgour at last, "when do you expect to reach Sark? It is now half-past one—past the time you agreed to take us across in, and it is not even in sight."

"Yes, sir; I can see it, though I daresay you can't; but we sha'n't be there before three o'clock to-day, if we are then. We have this heavy swell as well as the tide against us," said the man.

"It seems to me the wind is getting higher. I believe we are going to have a gale," said Grace, from the bottom of the boat.

"A gale! Oh, Uncle John, do let us turn back, then. I am sure we shall all be drowned in this little cockle-shell if there is a storm," said Kitty, raising her aching head to speak.

"Father, have you any brandy? I think May has fainted," said Grace, "she is such a dreadful sailor."

"Lift the lady up into the bows, sir, where she can feel the air. It ain't fit weather for ladies," said the mate.

"We must give it up, boys, I am afraid. See, May is very ill, and I am afraid this won't do Kitty any good. Shall we turn back, George?" said Mr. John Kilgour to his brother.

"Would they feel the motion less if we turned back?" asked Mr. Kilgour of the captain, who replied that they would, and seemed anxious to go back.

"The truth is, Father, the mate tells me, the other man has never been into Sark in his life, and does not know the course. The mate does; but the captain is afraid to go on. He thinks it is a scandalous shame, and I vote we pitch into him as soon as we get ashore," said Mervyn.

"Well, in that case I think we had better turn; it is now two. John, let us give it up, and land at the nearest place and eat our luncheon there, and drive home in the cool of the evening. One of these men must get us a carriage from town," said Mr. Kilgour, and to the intense relief of Grace and Kitty the boat was put round, and her course altered for St. Brelade's Bay, the nearest place in which they could be landed in safety, the mate told them.

Getting back, however, was a slower matter than going on, though the wind chopped and the sea was calmer after they turned, and the tide being now with them, the movement was not felt so much. They were two hours before they could distinguish the Corbière lighthouse, and then the wind had very nearly died away, only rising now and then, so that at times they were very nearly stationary.

"Now we are becalmed," said Mervyn, "first

almost a gale, and now not a capful of wind; I don't believe we shall get to St. Brelade's to-day."

"No, sir, I don't think we shall. We shall have to land you on the Corbières, I am afraid. We may be able to make them in another hour or so," was the encouraging reply.

There was nothing else to be done, and it was useless to complain. Indeed, by this time they were all, including Uncle John, so utterly sick of it that they were thankful to be landed anywhere, and were delighted when they came close enough to the lighthouse to speak to the man in charge. He directed the men where to go, pointing out a small boat in which to land. This was at last reached, and the two girls with Mr. Kilgour landed first, Grace waiting till the boat returned for her uncle and the boys, and at last they all stood in safety on one of the rocks. May and Kitty were too ill to attempt to climb up to the lighthouse at present; so spreading some rugs, they were made as comfortable as circumstances permitted, and then Mr. Kilgour suggested that as soon as Uncle John and Mervyn had done pitching into the boatman, they should all have something to eat, though, as it was now nearly six, the meal certainly could not come under the denomination of luncheon.

"How we are going to get home, I don't know," said Mervyn, "those men won't be in town till to-morrow morning in all probability, so it is not the slightest use depending on them. I expect, Father, you and I will have to walk to St. Aubin's for a carriage."

"Then, in that case we had better be moving.

So, pack up the fragments and follow. I'll go on with May; and John, will you bring Kitty?" said Mr. Kilgour, and in this order they clambered over the rocks to the lighthouse, where they were met by another man, who to their disgust and annoyance said, "You will have to stay here for six hours, sir. I have just come on duty. There is not time for you to get across. If you had come a quarter of an hour sooner, you might have managed it; but the tide is coming in fast."

Here was a dilemma—to be kept on these rocks with no shelter except what the lighthouse afforded till midnight—for it was past six o'clock then, and there was no means of getting a carriage except by walking five miles to St. Aubin's in the middle of the night, and knocking up the hotel people, and this with May and Kitty incapable of walking a hundred yards at present, while for Kitty to walk at all when she was feeling so weak would be very serious.

Poor Mr. John Kilgour was terribly distressed at the disastrous ending to his expedition, which he had hoped would have given them so much pleasure, and seeing his anxiety, they all did their utmost to treat the affair as a capital joke, though in point of fact it was a very serious matter. Had there been no ladies in the party, it would have been of less consequence, for gentlemen, when tired of loafing about the rocks, could have amused themselves with surveying the sea and sky from the top of the lighthouse, and between smoking and chatting to the keeper have whiled away the hours of their captivity. But the worst part of it now was that May and Kitty

would have to pass the whole night there, for even when the causeway of boulders and pieces of granite was again open, they were quite incapable of walking to St. Aubin's.

"What is to be done with these poor girls? They are only fit to go to bed, and they will be obliged to sit up all night," said Mr. John Kilgour.

"Oh, no, Uncle John, we can lie on these rocks wrapped up in rugs. We shall be very comfortable," said May.

"You sha'n't do that. I will go and see what accommodation the lighthouse can afford," said Mr. John Kilgour, going towards it with Mervyn and Sydney. The small room which served as a refuge to the keepers when on duty was by no means comfortable; it was close and stuffy, and an odour of stale tobacco pervaded it. It contained only a table and two arm-chairs, with horse-hair seats, and a shelf or two, with a few plates, and cups and saucers.

This did not seem promising; but the lighthouse keeper hearing the young ladies were ill, said he thought he could rig up something for them to lie down on; and disappearing for a few minutes, he returned with two ordinary cane-bottomed chairs and some coloured blankets.

"Now, sir, you have some rugs with you, I think, so if we were to make up a bed with these chairs for one young lady, perhaps the other could manage to sleep on the table. I will push it up against the wall, and I have a roll of cocoa-nut matting quite new, which I'll spread over it for the lady to lie on; but as for a pillow, I have not such a thing in the place," said the man.

"That won't matter; they have some shawls with them, they can fold them up for pillows," said Mervyn.

Mr. John Kilgour was only half satisfied with these arrangements; but Grace declared if they left her to manage it she would soon make the invalids "as comfortable as possible."

"Under the circumstances," added Mervyn, going for May and Kitty, whose one wish being to lie down and rest their aching heads, were delighted with the accommodation offered them. Grace helped them to take off their boots and loosen their clothes, and then May was tucked into rugs on the chairs, which she declared made a luxurious couch; and Kitty, who was accustomed to lying on the floor, and always slept on a hard bed, was quite satisfied with the table.

"We can sleep here beautifully, Grace, dear, tell Uncle John. Lock the door, and throw the key in at the window, and we shall be safe till you fetch us to-morrow morning," said May.

Grace obeyed these instructions so far as to lock the door, but promised to come in again before she left the lighthouse. She left the key in the lock, and then went to join the others who, by this time, had mounted to the top of the lighthouse, and were watching the stars as they gradually peeped out from the gallery. A grand sight it was on this lovely June night; the western sky still quite light, the vivid colours of the sunset having faded into lovely pale indescribable tints of green and gold near the horizon, while above, by a series of beautiful gradations, the hue ascended into the deep invisible blue of night,

through which canopy the stars hung out like globes of fire. Below, the waves kept up a constant accompaniment to the harmony of the spheres.

To while away the time the lighthouse keeper entertained them with an account of the Corbières, being occasionally interrupted by the scream of a dissipated cormorant as he flew home to his nest in the rocks.

"Are there many cormorants on these rocks?" asked Mervyn.

"Yes, sir, hundreds; they build in the rocks. They tell me they are called Corbières on account of it, corbière being an old French word for a cormorant. But there are plenty of gulls and divers as well as cormorants all about here. Did you ever hear the legend of the Corbières, gentlemen? No. Well, you must know that there used to be a law that if any ship were wrecked on the coast of Jersey the cargo, and the ship too, all went to the seigneur. So they used to burn lights on these rocks—not to warn sailors as we do—but to lure them on to destruction, and then when they were dashed to pieces in the reef, they ran in and robbed them, killing the passengers and crew too, sometimes. But the story goes that they did this once too often; for in 1495 a Spanish ship ran ashore here in a storm, and might have been saved, but the natives ran down on them and seized all the cargo, and ill-used the Spaniards till they would just as soon have perished in the storm, for not a pennyworth of their own was left them. However, the same winds that blew the ship ashore, now blew such a cloud of sand over the coast that all the crops

were spoiled, and the sea rose and stole a large piece of land, with all the Spanish cargo, and from that day to this has kept it. So the Jersey men were well punished for their wickedness. That is the legend, gentlemen. How much is true I can't tell you; but it is an awfully dangerous reef. All the passages are unsafe, and require most skilful navigating."

"How often are you on duty here?" asked Mervyn.

"Every other six hours, sir. There are two of us, my mate and I; we take it by turns, except on very stormy nights, and then we sit up together in case of any steamer being wrecked oft the rocks. Now when the tide goes down, which will be about two hours later, I shall go ashore and my mate will relieve me; but we never both leave the house at the same time. I can't go till he comes, if he were to keep me here twelve hours," said the man, who was of a garrulous disposition, and seemed pleased to have some listeners. At last the hours slipped away and the bridge was again open, when Mr. Kilgour, the two boys, and Grace went ashore with the lighthouse keeper. Mr. John Kilgour declined to leave May and Kitty alone, so he remained to keep guard over them.

"The bridge will be open till nearly seven tomorrow morning, John," said Mr. Kilgour before leaving; "so if you manage to move the girls to this man's house, close to the beach, he says his wife would look after them till I return with a carriage; and I doubt if that will be before seven, if so early."

And then they started on their walk, the lighthouse keeper going part of the way with them, to show them a short cut; but even the shortest way it was a good five miles to the St. Aubin's Hotel, and this in the dark, on a strange road, after such a long day, seemed equal to ten; and Grace and Sydney were so exhausted that they were obliged to rest several times during the latter part of the journey. At last they reached the hotel, and after a good deal of trouble succeeded in rousing the people, when Mr. Kilgour insisted on Grace and the boys going straight to bed, which they were none of them loth to do, while he rested on a sofa till the grooms were up and a carriage could be got ready.

Meanwhile, at six o'clock Mr. John Kilgour knocked at the door of the lighthouse cabin and awoke his nieces, telling them unless they could manage to walk ashore now they would have to wait till mid-day; upon which May rose and awoke Kitty. They were both much better after their night's rest; indeed May declared herself quite well, and full of regrets that her uncle had sat up all night on their account. They walked across to the cottage, where they each found a bowl of delicious bread and milk awaiting them, and by the time they had finished this Mr. Kilgour drove up.

"Well," said Mr. John Kilgour as they all sat at breakfast in St. Aubin's Hotel, "we have not been to Sark after all, and a nice joke it will be against us to the end of our days, I expect. I wonder what your mother will say to me, girls!"

"One thing she will say is, that none of us shall ever go in a boat again as long as we live," said Grace. "And another, that we must leave Jersey or we shall certainly all be drowned."

"There is one thing we won't do, we won't go home this morning; we will drive to L'Etacq and lunch there, and then reach home about the time we intended doing. We can tease your mother by telling her we slept in a lighthouse before we let her have the laugh at us," said Mr. John Kilgour.



CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

MRS. KILGOUR was by no means disposed to take a laughing view of the matter at all. She was sure they had been in very great danger, and if they lived much longer in Jersey she was certain she would be left a childless widow—for Mr. Kilgour was just as bad as the children in running into danger—therefore the only remedy was to return to England.

There are some people in the world who must have a grievance; they can't live without one, and if Providence has not given them one they invent one for themselves. Mrs. Kilgour's grievance always was the place she lived in, it never suited her; she was never well in London, and now she lived in Jersey she was always harping on returning to England. This proposition, however, was received with a storm of indignant remonstrance by all the young people. They liked Jersey; they had never been so happy in their lives; they had no wish to leave it; certainly not till the two years were up; besides, as Grace

asked, how could they leave since they could not afford to live in their London house?

"Well, children," said Mr. Kilgour, "suppose I tell you a secret. I meant to have kept it for another nine months, but I think I may safely tell it now. The fact is I am as rich as ever I was. It is perfectly true I had lost a large sum of money when I gave up our London house; but I have since recovered it, and for your comfort I may as well say, by economising here for this year or two I have been able to invest some of it so that I may not be reduced to poverty by future misfortunes. The truth was other reasons drove me to taking this step besides the loss of money; it was the family failing as much as pecuniary failure that led me to it, but my plan seems to have succeeded almost too well. How is it, Mervyn, that you are content to live here, and get into the army through the militia, and manage on half your former allowance, which you were always complaining of?"

"I suppose because I had such a habit of complaining I did not know when I was well off," said Mervyn.

"Then, Grace, why do you wish to remain here and take lessons of the only masters the place affords, when in London you were never satisfied with the best masters of the day?"

"I don't know," said Grace blushing.

"Yes, I think you do, Gracie, and so do I; the fact is you were all discontented, and for Kitty it was becoming so serious a matter that her health if not her life depended on curing it; so you see I was bound to take some very stringent

measures, and though at the time it was strictly true that I was almost ruined, I still hoped to recover my losses; but I knew no better way of curing all of you than the plan I adopted, which, as I say, has been in some ways too successful, for you have all grown so fond of Jersey you don't wish to leave it, while your mother's life here seems to be passed in fear and trembling lest some accident or injury should befall you. Now we can't return to our own house till next March, so I think you must make up your mind, Maggie, to remain till then; meanwhile I have some idea of building a house here for us to come to every summer. I fancy it would be much better for us to be on the spot while it is being built, and it would be such an amusement to watch its progress that really, Mother, it would almost reconcile you to remaining. Then, you know, whenever you are tired of London you have nothing to do but to take the boat and come over here for a few weeks' change," said Mr. Kilgour.

Shouts of approval greeted this proposal; half a dozen different sites were at once suggested; imaginary houses were planned and built, and even furnished, in a few minutes, and Mr. Kilgour had no peace until he promised to go the very next day and look at at least three of the proposed sites.

"And, Father, you will have to get a lawyer to draw up the agreement for you, otherwise you will never know whether the house and the land are yours or not; and whether you wish it to be mine or not, by Jersey law it becomes mine unless

you execute a deed of gift in your lifetime," said Mervyn, who was always raging against Jersey laws and Jerseymen, eminently old Falle, to whom he still maintained a rooted dislike. Nothing that he did pleased Mervyn, who criticised all his farming operations as though he were a Norfolk farmer himself instead of having spent all his life in London till he came to Jersey. He never saw such farming in his life; what did they want to make their wheat into such hideous heaps for, instead of making it into sheaves as in England? and where was the use of covering the ground with vraic[1] in winter? and why were they not content with one crop of hay or potatoes in a season instead of trying to get two or three? But Mervyn's chief grievance was the potato-season, when Mr. Falle, his sons, and his servant would shut up the house and all go and work at digging up and packing potatoes, labouring often from five in the morning till nine at night, returning to the house for their meals.

"These Jersey people are quite potato-mad, and old Falle is the biggest lunatic of the lot. What a joke it would be if some one were to break into his house and rob it while they are all out potato-packing!" said Mervyn one day soon after the Sark excursion; and then, as if a sudden thought had occurred to him, he beckoned Sydney out of the room.

"Sydney, where is the key of the door into old Falle's house, the door in our kitchen I mean; do you know?"

[1] Vraic is seaweed.

"Oh yes! Ellen keeps it. Why? shall I get it for you?"

"Yes; not now, though; let us see, to-morrow is your half-holiday, isn't it? Well, you get the key and bring it to me after dinner; I am going to play a trick on old Falle," said Mervyn. "My difficulty is to get Ellen out of the way; I must try and manage that between this and then."

The next day Mervyn persuaded May that it was too hot for her to go to market, so she had better get her mother to send Ellen in the afternoon. May, glad to get off going, took the bait, and Ellen was sent, leaving the kitchen empty for Mervyn's performance.

"What are you going to do, Mervyn?" said Sydney producing the key.

"You will see; but first of all we must enlist Grace or Kitty; Grace it had better be, because Kitty is lying down. Just run and tell Grace I want her."

Sydney obeyed, and Grace appeared rather unwillingly.

"Grace, I want you to go to the farm-yard. You can take a book and sit in the barn or under the chestnut tree, and if you see any of the Falles coming home come and tell me, I shall be in the kitchen. Go at once, there's a darling, because I have no time to lose. I am going to play a trick on old Falle; I'll tell you what it is as soon as I have finished," said Mervyn.

Grace brightened up at this, for she enjoyed a piece of mischief as well as anyone, and willingly undertook the part assigned her.

"Now come on, Syd; give me the key;" and

in another minute Mervyn had unlocked the door of communication between the two houses, and he and Sydney stood in the Falles' kitchen.

"What are you going to do now, Mervyn?" asked Sydney.

"Carry every plate, dish, cup, saucer, basin, jug, and glass that I can find into our little room, to begin with; you must help, so look sharp and be careful; if we break any we shall have to buy new ones, you know. I will clear the dresser, because you can't reach, while you carry all off the lower shelf into our room."

Sydney did as he was told, and the next quarter of an hour was spent in carrying plates and dishes, cups and saucers, out of Mr. Falle's kitchen through Ellen's into a little room Sydney and Mervyn used for carpentering, till at last there only remained one stack of plates to remove, not a china or glass article of any description remaining.

"Wait a minute, Sydney. Put those plates on Ellen's table, and then come and help me; I have not done yet," said Mervyn, opening the kitchen door and going into the hall, followed somewhat nervously by Sydney.

There stood a pile of hampers all filled with potatoes, some already laced down, others still open. Mervyn went to an open one, and bidding Sydney catch hold, hauled it into the kitchen.

"Now, then, hang a potato on to every hook in the dresser, and put rows in the place of the plates there. That will do, I think," said Mervyn, standing back and gazing admiringly on the dresser, now adorned with potatoes instead of plates and dishes.

"What a sell for old Falle and all of them when they come back, to find all their plates and cups turned into potatoes. They won't have a thing to eat from or drink out of," said Mervyn; and struck with the idea of Mr. Falle's horror he and Sydney went into peals of laughter, in the midst of which Grace came tearing into their own kitchen, and crying:

"Cave! cave! Mervyn, quick; they are coming home!"

Just then Mervyn heard a key turn in the hall door. He seized the half-empty hamper, dragged it after him through the door of communication, and closed and locked it after him; when he, Grace, and Sydney all went into fits of laughter.

"Come and see, Grace. Sydney, bring the hamper. I will carry the plates into our room, or we shall be found out," said Mervyn, following Grace with a pile of plates; but just as he got inside his room he slipped and down went the plates with an awful crash, which was heard all over the house.

Mrs. Kilgour, May, and Nurse all came rushing to see what had happened, but before they reached the room Mervyn had picked himself up and locked the door.

"What is the matter, boys? Who is here, Mervyn, Sydney? What have you broken? Is any one hurt?" cried Mrs. Kilgour, shaking the door.

"No, no, mother; we are all right. It is only a little smash. I let something fall. No one is hurt," said Mervyn; and finding she could not

induce him to open the door, Mrs. Kilgour at last went away only half satisfied.

Both Grace and Sydney were laughing too much to be able to speak, or to assist Mervyn in picking up the broken crockery.

"It is no laughing matter for me. I shall have to go to town and match these plates," said Mervyn.

"How many are broken?" said Grace.

But it took some time to piece the broken bits together and find out the extent of the damage. Two plates had escaped entirely, but they found no less than eight were smashed.

"They are common willow pattern, that is one comfort; so I can match them anywhere. I had better go at once; but, oh! how I should like to see old Falle's face when he comes in!" said Mervyn. But this being impossible he started for town on his errand, taking Sydney with him.

The boys did not get back till past six o'clock, when Grace met them with the news that the Falles' servant had been in to borrow some plates and cups and saucers, and had given Ellen an account of the mysterious robbery, the extraordinary part being how the thieves got in, as no door or window was open in the house.

"Both Ellen and the servant think the house is haunted, and that, as they say, no human hand has touched the things," finished Grace.

"Poor old man!" said Mr. Kilgour when he heard the story. "I must go in and see him after tea, and condole with him."

"I am sure he can afford to lose a few plates and dishes," said Mervyn aloud, inwardly adding, "and I wish you would keep away from him and

not busy yourself in the matter, which does not concern you in the very least."

Mr. Kilgour, however, had his own ideas as to neighbourly courtesy and attention; so after his tea he paid his visit to Mr. Falle, and was shown the kitchen with its dresser trimmed with potatoes, at which sight he had the greatest difficulty in preventing himself from laughing aloud. He had a kind of suspicion that his own boys probably had something to do with the matter, and later on in the evening this suspicion became certainty. As he was smoking a pipe in the garden about nine o'clock a boy entered carrying Mervyn's willow-patterned plates.

"You have made a mistake, my boy. Those plates are not for us. They are for Mr. Falle next door, I expect," said Mr. Kilgour.

"Beg pardon, sir; the young gentleman told me to deliver them at the side window to him," said the boy.

"Indeed! this way, then," said Mr. Kilgour, leading the way to the window of Mervyn's room. "Mervyn, here is a boy with some plates which he says you have ordered. What does it mean?"

"It is all right, Father. I broke some this afternoon, so I ordered these."

"I don't think it is all right by any means," said Mr. Kilgour, who knew they had not a willow-patterned plate in the house. "Just come out here, Mervyn, and speak to me."

Mervyn obeyed as soon as the boy had gone.

"I suppose you have been playing this trick on Mr. Falle, have you?"

"Yes, I did it. I meant to put the things back

on Monday when they are all out. I broke the plates by accident, so I have replaced them, and I knew they would send in to borrow of us; so there is no great harm done," said Mervyn.

"Except the poor old fellow is upset about it, and I think hurt too. How could you be such a young donkey, Mervyn? You won't be able to replace them without his knowledge, as he never intends to leave the house empty again. I am very sorry you did it. I dislike practical jokes; they so often wound much more deeply than you intend."

"What do you think I had better do then?" said Mervyn.

"Go round and tell him you did it, and get Ellen to take back all the china. I don't see any other course. Had Sydney anything to do with it?"

"Oh! he only helped me. He is not to blame in the least."

"Never mind; he is old enough to know better. Send him here; a word in season won't do him any harm," said Mr. Kilgour. "And wait for him; he shall go with you."

And Sydney received a sharp reproof, which brought the tears to his eyes, and instructions to accompany Mervyn on a mission equally distasteful to both. Mr. Falle was most indignant, and blew them up sky-high for their pains, but condescended to take Mervyn's offered hand at the close of the interview.

The upshot of this joke was, Mr. Kilgour determined to send Mervyn to Sandhurst for a term or two, saying he got into more mischief than he

had ever done in his life before, and that as he could afford it it would be better in many ways. So after the long vacation Mervyn left for Sandhurst, to return at Christmas for the holidays. By this time the new house had risen some feet from the foundations, and a great part of both Mervyn's and his father's time was spent in watching the workmen. The site chosen was at Samarez, about ten minutes' walk from La Chasse. The house was to face the sea, to reach which you had only to cross the highroad. It was to be a kind of bungalow; all the rooms on one floor, with a corridor down the centre to be used as a reception room, and all the other rooms opening from it. The drawing and dining rooms were to face the sea and to open into a large wide verandah.

Mr. Kilgour had bought about an acre of land, which he proposed laying out as a flower-garden and a tennis-court; but he was not hopeful about the cultivation of it, as it was so close to the sea, and they would be exposed to wind, and liable to have the plants blighted by the sand which would be blown across from the beach. However, the Jersey soil is so prolific that they hoped this would atone for other disadvantages. The house was a source of great delight and amusement to them all, and never a day passed without every member of the family walking down to watch the progress of the builders. It was to be finished and ready for them to go into by the end of July; and as they had now quite decided to leave Jersey and return to their London house at Lady-day, at the end of their two

years' exile, they would spend a few months in London, and then come back to their new house in Jersey for the summer, so that they would not have to bid the place a final good-bye.

It would have been a terrible wrench to them all to leave it altogether, for they had become very much attached to the place; besides the sea air suited Kitty better than London, and frequent change would be necessary for her for some years, until she had quite outgrown all weakness in her back. She was still liable to fits of depression, though they were very rare now, and happily Mr. Kilgour had found out that the best way to cure them was to propose to write to Dr. Sandys, a threat that he only once carried into execution, and then Kitty begged so hard that he would not send the letter that he relented and destroyed it, saying that another time the letter would be posted without any warning.

Jersey had successfully cured Grace of a great many of her airs. She saw so many people, her equals in birth, living on a quarter of her father's income, and quite satisfied with what it procured for them, that she ceased to fret over imaginary sorrows or long for things which she found she could do perfectly well without. She had learned, too, that the more one has of this world's goods the more one is apt to wish for, "enough" being always a little more than we have; and on coming to Jersey to live in such a different style, she had been astonished to find how many things she had been accustomed to consider absolutely necessary to her comfort or to her position, which she was quite able to dispense with.

May did not hesitate to say she considered the two years they had spent in Jersey the happiest of her life. She heard regularly every mail from Harry Brand, who was getting on famously. He had passed in four native languages, and had a very good staff-appointment. In fact, if he could only get leave when the stipulated two years were over, he would be able to come home and fetch May, as he was now in a position to marry. Suddenly, at the end of February, his letters ceased. He missed three mails, and poor May was terribly anxious and worried about it. Happily for her she had so much to do in packing up for their departure that she had not much time to sit and brood over her sorrow. Nothing that any one could suggest was of much comfort. He might have missed one mail by accident; but he could never have missed three. If he were ill, he might have got some friend to write a few lines for him; and even if he were up country he would have been sure in the last letter she had received from him to tell May he was going. What to think May did not know. She never doubted his love for her—that was not the reason of his silence, she was certain. Still it was extraordinary she had no answer to her letters, and she was very unhappy, though the others were all so kind and considerate to her that she bore up as well as she could before them. One morning, a few days before they had fixed to leave Jersey, May was in the drawing-room on her knees packing a box of ornaments that had accumulated since they had been in Jersey, and which were to be left behind for the new

house, when a violent ring at the door-bell was heard.

"Who can that be at this time of day?" said Grace.

"Only Miss Taylor, I expect," said May, wiping some tears that had risen unbidden from her eyes.

"It is not; it is a gentleman's voice and step," said Grace.

For a moment the colour rushed into May's face, and a wild hope sprung up in her heart, to be rudely dashed down the next instant by Ellen opening the door and announcing:

"Mr. Carteret."

"Old worry!" muttered May, not rising from her knees, when a half-smothered exclamation from Grace caused her to look up, and lo! Harry Brand stood before her.

May dropped the vase she was packing, letting it fall into a thousand pieces, gave a scream, and the next moment was locked in Harry's arms, regardless of Grace, who took the opportunity of slipping from the room unobserved to tell the good news to the rest of the household.

It was really Harry, though at first May almost thought it was his ghost; and this was the reason she had not heard from him for the last three or four weeks. He had come home on sick leave, having had a fall from his horse, and, as he said, providentially sprained his right wrist, so that he could not write for some weeks, and as his work was a great deal of it writing, he had had three months' leave given him, and had come home for May. Of course at first both Mr. and Mrs. Kil-

gour said it was impossible for May to get a trousseau and be married in a little over a month's time; but both the lovers pleaded so hard, May declaring that another three weeks such as she had just passed would kill her, that at last they gave in, and it was arranged that the outfit should be ordered as soon as they reached London, and the wedding take place at the end of April.

Harry stayed with them for the few days they remained in Jersey, and then they all returned together to England, arriving safely, much to Mrs. Kilgour's satisfaction and relief.

The old house had never seemed so large and so handsome as it now did after their more homely quarters in Jersey, and one and all of them were really pleased to see it again.

"Well," said Mr. Kilgour at dinner that night, "we are all safe again, in spite of all your mother's predictions. There is only one thing I hope we have left behind us, and that I am sure no one regrets, the 'Family Failing,' discontent."

THE END.







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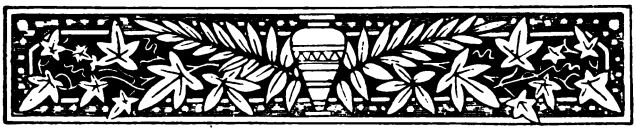
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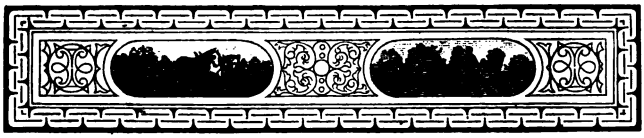
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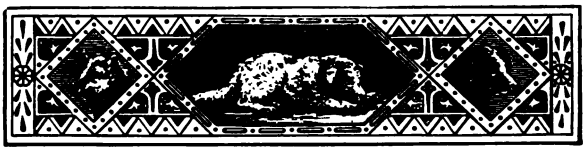
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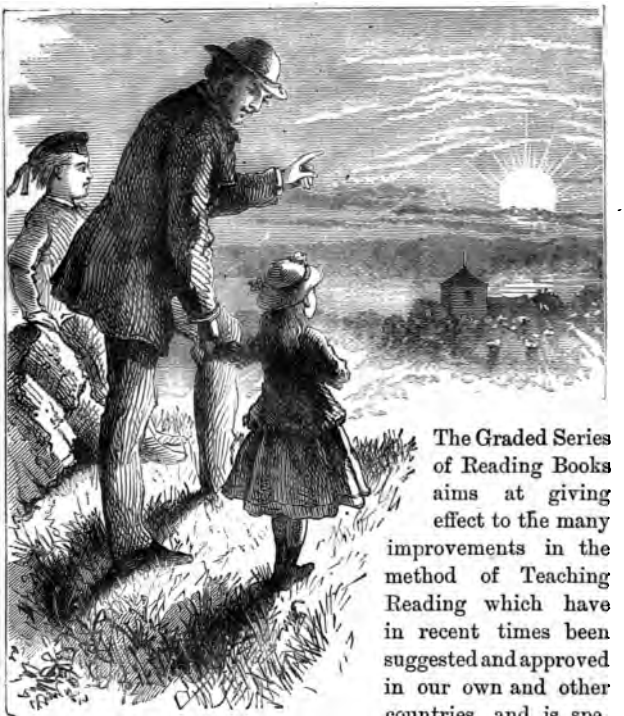
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